

A decorative graphic at the top of the cover features two teal anchors on either side, connected by a horizontal line of rope. The rope is depicted with a series of small, repeating loops.

HOME FROM SEA

GEORGE S. WASSON

C. P. sent to P. R. L. 9/28/32

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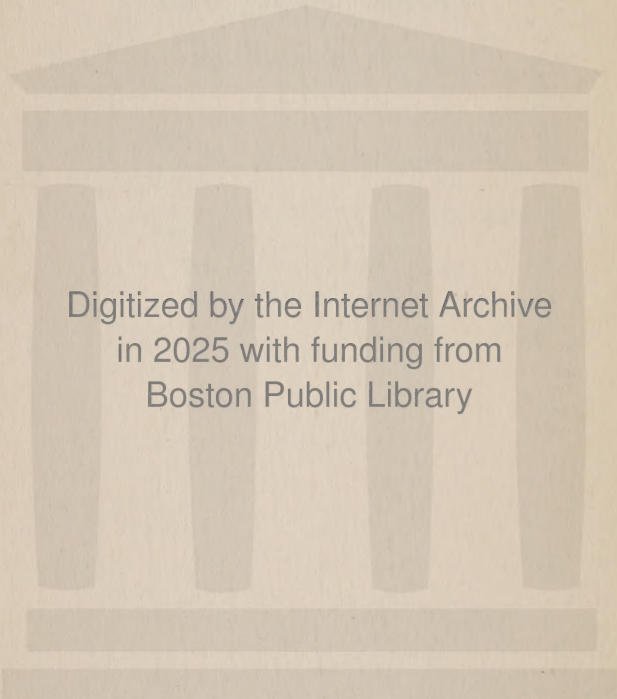
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HOME FROM SEA



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THE OLD PINKY PALM

HOME FROM SEA

BY

GEORGE S. WASSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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I

THE ROTE

I

THE ROTE

WE country doctors, in particular, are likely to have strange experiences, yet what is certainly the most singular episode of my practice might as easily have fallen to the lot of one in almost any walk of life. Many attempts have been made to explain the affair; I myself was nearly worn out at the time in the same vain endeavor, though now content to let it rest among the mysteries before which, chaff who will, sages and fools alike stand helpless as babes.

It was the second autumn after I had hung out my shingle in the remote northern sea-coast village of Killick Cove, and an unusually tempestuous season it proved. There were early and heavy falls of snow, but a series of pelting eastern rainstorms ensued, and at

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Christmas time the tawny yellow of the landscape was only here and there accentuated by wasted patches of white, pierced with stiff brown reeds and grasses.

Throughout the place people shook their heads, and spoke ominously of the "Green Christmas," though, in face of nature's peculiarly drear and sad-colored aspect at the time, the term seemed much of a misnomer. Under a long continuance of strong easterly winds, the sea outside remained so rough as to hamper greatly the fishermen and lobster-catchers, who chiefly made up the population of the little town; indeed, it seemed that for weeks my ears had been filled day and night with the unceasing jarring rumble of the rote.

The day before Christmas was especially disagreeable and depressing. Fierce rain-squalls alternated with flurries of wet snow, and the fast increasing boom of the close-bordering sea began to have a noticeable effect upon the nerves. Then, too, the tossing bell-

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buoy on the Hue and Cry ledges, seldom silent, on this dark afternoon sent its mournful tones vibrating inland upon the salty gusts with dismal iteration.

I lodged at the time in a small house on the principal street of the straggling village, my office being, in fact, nothing less than the hitherto inviolable best room of the widowed owner. On this day the home-like sounds of dish-washing after dinner still issued from the adjacent kitchen, when a mud-bedraggled open wagon stopped at the front gate. Though the rain had then ceased to a great extent, the driver was fully encased in oilskins; and, as he advanced through the matted grass to the seldom used front door, I recognized him as Shubael Spurling, a fishing skipper living in a distant section of the town, known as the Number Four District. This time my services were sought for a valuable cow, whose ailment baffled local talent completely; and with slight delay we were wallowing through the

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mud and puddles of the lonely road leading to Number Four.

A dreary ride at best, it was especially so under the watery skies of this stormy afternoon. For some miles there were no trees, and, as I say, constant rains had given the wind-swept country a most cheerless and sodden appearance. Coming as I had from a quiet town in the interior, where wind was almost unheeded, where stately elms lined the broad streets, and a peaceful river flowed through long reaches of fertile intervale, this for some time seemed to me, indeed, a barren and desolate land.

Here, in rocky Killick Cove, the great salt sea was always overwhelmingly in evidence. The talk of the people was chiefly of wind and weather, of fishing craft and their crews, and hairbreadth escapes. The rude little wooden weather-vanes, so common throughout the village, were closely watched from dawn to dark, and the wind never varied

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in direction or force without much ensuing discussion of the change and its effect upon absent fishing boats.

But it was the ever-present sound of the sea which made the greatest impression upon my bucolic mind; day and night, summer and winter, always the ceaseless rote of the sea, like the breathing of some great monster it seemed to me; sometimes very low and faint in the village, but still always noticeable in some degree, and at times jarring every window in the town with its thunderous rumble.

At the top of a rocky ridge called Harbor Hill, directly behind the settlement, Skipper Shubael stopped his horse, and for some moments closely scanned the great extent of leaden sea, already thickly flecked with rushing whitecaps. Believing, as did many others, that the present long-continued "spell of weather" was about to culminate in a heavy gale, an aged uncle of his, he explained to me, had started early that morning in his small

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schooner for a distant fishing ground known as "Betty Moody's Garden," hoping to save from damage a number of trawls set there some days previous. Several sail of vessels were in sight from the hilltop, staggering under shortened canvas toward the cove from various directions, but Shubael soon declared positively that his uncle's little pinky schooner, Palm, was not among them.

After this, the road plunged abruptly into a dense, heron-haunted swamp of alders and cat-tails, with, here and there, gloomy-looking hackmatacks raising their drooping forms against a pale gray sky blurred by hurrying masses of scud from the sea. Then followed a dreary extent of rain-soaked pasture, thickly strewn with huge granite boulders, among which the narrow road wound its way, between moss-grown stone walls. Stray sheep bleated forlornly as they fled at the wagon's approach, and the hoarse cawing of innumerable crows rose above the rote's distant booming.

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For some distance here the road was especially bad, and in bumping too roughly over a protruding ledge, one of the wagon springs gave way. This caused much delay, but with assistance from the nearest house we were at length enabled to proceed again slowly. Rain was then once more driving in slanting torrents before the ever-augmenting gale, and, with darkness already settling down, I foresaw anything but a pleasurable return over the rough route.

A short distance farther, emerging from a thick growth of birches, the leaves of which formed a sodden cushion under the dripping wheels, the road again dropped with appalling steepness into a deep gully, and crossed a turbulent brook by a rude bridge built of treenail-riddled oak plank from a wrecked vessel. As the stiff-kneed old mare cautiously braced herself for the steep descent, furious gusts of chilling wind blew up the ravine, laden with the heavy odor of kelp, apparently direct from

THE ROTE

the sea. My ear also caught the repeated tones of a bell, and, like a deep bass to the brook's noisy babble, came again with startling distinctness the sullen rumble of the rote. I at once asked Skipper Shubael how it was that we got these sounds again so plainly, at such a distance inland.

“Well, there you, doctor,” he said; “it doos appear as though we’d come close anigh the shore again, and no mistake. You’ll ’most always git the rote good and plain here to this hollow, for all it’s a plumb three mile back to the shore, the straightest course ever a man can lay. Someways or ’nother, this hollow fetches the sound up along, kind of tunnel-fashion like, I cal’late. If only it had n’t turned to and shut in so thick-a-fog and rain again, you could sight straight down through the hollow from here, and see it breaking a clear torch on the Hue and Cry, I’ll warrant! Seems’s though I seldom ever knowed the sea to make faster than what it has since morning; and

THE ROTE

Lord knows, it was rough as a grater before, so there's quite a few of us ain't made a set for a week's time. This wind breezens on at every hand's turn now, and I wisht I could know for certain whether Uncle Pelly made out to pull them trawls of hisn, out there on the 'Garden' to-day. That's where he lives to; that little reddish-colored house up there, front of them fars, with the big ellum handy-by. The old sir picked him a real sightly place to build, did n't he, though?"

"Why, yes," I said; "but it has always seemed strange to me that so many of you fishermen should have located so far inland, away from your work."

"Oh, well," the skipper said, as we began to ascend the opposite bank of the gully, "it was the old-seed folks that turned to and built clean away in back here, to commence with. All the way ever I heard it accounted for is they growed so sick and tired of fog and salt water, that, come to git forehanded enough to

THE ROTE

build, they was possessed to strike in back here fur 's ever they could. I think 's likely they figured that, come to quit going altogether, they'd love to set and take their comfort to home, and have green stuff growing close aboard of 'em for all the rest-part of their stop-ping. Folks changes 'round, though. You take it this day o' the world, and a place in back here amongst the far trees ain't worth a red. The women-folks in particular don't like up this way; they'd lievser be down to the Cove, where there 's gossup-talk going on to make it kind of lively like. But take Uncle Pelly, he likes tiptop when he's home; the thing of it is he ain't home no great. He's going on eighty, and has swore off fishing no end already, but you let mack'el commence to mash off here, or let haddick strike anyways plenty in the fall o' the year same 's they done a spell ago, and the old sir is just as fishy as ever. I tell him he'd full better lay back now, and take some peace of his life, but wild hosses

THE ROTE

wouldn't hold him home soon's ever he takes a notion to go.

"He's got it worked down consid'ble fine, too, the old sir has. You take it out abreast of his place there on the aidge of the hollow, and you'll get the rote double and thribble as plain as what we do here. As fur back as I can remember, it's always been his way to take a walk down acrosst his field there to the aidge of the hollow every morning reg'lar, so's to stop and listen for the rote a spell. Nobody else knows exactly how he works it, but seem's though someways or 'nother he makes out to tell whether or no it's going to be a day outside. That sounds kind of queer like, but it's seldom ever he misses his cal'lation.

"There's always *some* rote in that hollow, you see, no matter if it's the dead of summer time and stark calm, and Uncle Pelly, he cal'lates to make a set to the east'ard or west'ard, according to whichever way he gits the rote the plainest. He cal'lates to keep well to

THE ROTE

wind'ard in room of to loo'ard, you see, allowing the rote tells him it's liable to breezen up and overblow, especially soon's ever the weather grows catchy in the fall o' the year. Folks can laugh all they want; there's something to it, just the same. I never knowed the old sir to stub his toe any great yet, without it was to blow a sail or two off'n him, and he's been going out of here rising of sixty year now."

It was nearly dark when we came upon a cluster of houses, in few of which, however, were any signs of life visible. Shubael remarked that but a baker's dozen or so remained in all the once populous Number Four District, and that most of these would be glad to sell at any price. Directly after he pointed out the lights of his own dwelling, beyond question also "sightly," but standing fully exposed to every bleak wind, on the very top of the highest rocky hill in the township of Killick Cove. Just opposite, dimly discernible

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in the gathering gloom, rose the bulky form of the meeting-house and its stunted belfry, like the neighboring schoolhouse of Number Four, long closed for lack of population to support it; "a couple more of our old has-beens," was the skipper's brief comment as we turned in at his barnyard.

I soon ascertained without surprise that the unfortunate cow, rather than the difficulty from which she suffered, had already yielded to the unique treatment adopted. Meantime the storm steadily increased, until, returning nearly in its face being thought out of the question, I accepted the hospitalities of the house over night. But for me, at least, little sleep was possible in the distracting turmoil raging about the building until near daybreak. In the furious blasts several blinds banged themselves from their fastenings with ear-splitting crashes; a loose sash of my window rattled abominably, and pelting floods of rain beat with constantly increasing violence

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against the small panes, till, forcing entrance, it dripped steadily from the narrow sill on the braided rugs of the floor. Later in the night, changing to sleet, it beat upon the glass like a sand-blast, until succeeded near dawn by the muffled swirl of plastering snow.

Next morning, under a thick coating of ice, the trees cracked sharply in the then waning gale, as we started to return in a borrowed wagon, with wheels clogged by muddy snow and leaves. When nearly abreast of the small house in which Shubael's uncle, Pelatiah Spurling, lived, two men were met bearing homeward pails of water drawn from a well in the adjoining field. They first spoke of the unequaled fury of the storm, and then, after condoling with Skipper Shubael over the loss of the cow, inquired whether he had seen or heard anything of his uncle before leaving the village the day before.

While one was yet speaking, the tall, angular figure of a white-bearded old man appeared

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from behind a clump of alders in the field close by. He wore a short jumper of faded blue frocking, with the oilskin sou'-wester and high red boots of the local fishermen. In one hand was a wooden water bucket, and, with head sharply inclined against the still boisterous wind and drizzle, he slowly followed a well-worn path toward the spring.

"There he goes now, this minute!" Shubael exclaimed. "Hullo, there, Uncle Pelly, you!" he shouted. "Keep her off a point or two! Guess you must had an all-day job of it yesterday, and no yachting trip, neither, was it?"

Apparently not hearing these words, however, the old man plodded steadily on. At the well-curb he left his pail, and continued across the spongy field in the direction of the hollow.

"The old sir grows deaf right along, now'-days," one of the men said.

"Yes, he doos *so*," the other assented. "My

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woman, she was speaking of it only the last time he was in home there. All the way you can make any talk along of him now'days is to get close aboard on the port side. I'm glad, though, he give his hooker sheet, and come back yesterday before this breeze o' wind took holt so spiteful. But he must got in consid'ble late, for I was home all the afternoon myself, and never see no sign of him coming up along before night-time."

"I guess likely they made a long day of it fast enough," said Shubael. "The old sir allowed he cal'lated to pull them trawls if it took a leg. By good rights they had no call to go out yesterday, anyways. You can't take and jump the old Palm into a head-beat sea same's you could forty year ago, and, to tell the truth, I'm plaguy glad the old man see when he'd got enough, and pointed her for the turf in some kind of season. Just you take and watch him a minute, doctor! He's dropped his bucket there to the well, so's to

THE ROTE

lug home a turn of water when he comes back along, same's usual. There you, now he's got hisself all placed in just the right berth to hearken to the rote. Godfrey mighty! seem's though I'd seen him doing that very same act since I was the bigness of a trawl-kag!"

Leaning slightly forward, with one hand raised to his ear in an attitude of rapt attention, old Skipper Pelatiah Spurling stood listening under the gnarly limbs of a great oak, at the verge of the hollow, his long, white beard fluttering to one side in the strong sea wind.

"Unless he's very deaf, he ought to hear that rumble this morning," I said. "What do you suppose he expects to learn just now?"

"That's hard telling," one of the men laughed. "I've lived nigh neighbor to him the heft of my life, and ain't never fathomed this rote business yet. There's no rubbing it out, though, that somehow or 'nother, from the way she sounds up through the hollow there, the old sir will 'most generally give

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you the correct almanac for quite a little spell ahead ! ”

Shubael then spoke of waiting to learn from the old man his experience of the day before, but, as I was now growing somewhat anxious to reach my office again, he postponed the interview until a later occasion.

At the top of Harbor Hill we once more held up for a moment to view the wild scene that suddenly opened before us. Seaward a dense bank of fog still hung close over the madly heaving waters. From under this gray shroud of mist enormous cockling surges constantly rushed, and, charging upon the land in endless columns, tore themselves to pieces on the jagged, kelp-grown ledges in a broad fringe of seething foam and high-leaping spray. Half a mile off-shore, where the black heads of the dreaded Hue and Cry ledges now and then appeared in a mass of tumbling breakers, the blood-red bell buoy danced the maddest of hornpipes, now buried from sight com-

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pletely, and now flung reeling headlong on the crest of some great, on-rushing sea, its frenzied clang at times pealing loud above the rumbling rote. Suddenly, somewhat farther to the left, a mountainous, darkling billow seemed to gather others to its mighty self, and, rearing a ragged outline high above the misty horizon, broke in a wildly careering smother of snow-white foam, fully an acre in extent. An instant later came a thunderous report that shook the very ledges beneath our feet.

“Set-fire!” cried Shubael. “Now you’ve heard him talk, doctor! That was Old Aaron that up and spoke just now, and you might stop here to this Cove a long spell and not hear the likes again! It’s seldom ever hubbly enough for Old Aaron to break, but when he doos take the notion, then all hands best stand from under!”

Saying which, in his excitement Shubael leaned far over the dashboard, and surprised

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the mare into a temporary trot by several blows with the reins. Half way down the hill an old man, bent nearly double, came hobbling from his door to hail us.

“Make out to sight ’em, Shu?” he called.

“Sight what?” the skipper asked, stopping short.

“Why, the sticks of the wrack. Ain’t you heard tell? They say there’s some little hooker lays sunk off there somewheres, betwixt Old Aaron and the main, with just her mastheads showing.”

“There wa’n’t ary spar showing out there two minutes’ time since, that I’ll make affidavit to!” Shubael declared. “I guess likely no wrack won’t hang together long when Old Aaron breaks same’s he done just now, anyways!”

“That’s what I says to ’em myself,” the old fellow piped. “I told ’em he broke once at low-water slack last night, too, but they all allowed I dremp it.”

THE ROTE

“Your hearing is full better than the most of us now, Skipper Tommy!” Shubael called, as we drove on toward the village.

Nearly abreast of the bellowing Hue and Cry breakers, the road skirted a strip of coarse shingle beach, lying between glistening, spray-swept ledges, which reflected the pale sky in countless shining pools. Here the towering, white-crested seas hurled themselves in far-reaching floods of seething brine that swept the snow from long stretches of the road, leaving in its place great windrows of fragrant rock-weed and kelp. Scattered groups of people conferred at the tops of their voices, and intently watched the churning waste of breakers off-shore. Women in hooded shawls pulled children back from the steep, gullied beach; mongrel curs raced to and fro among the long, stranded kelps, barking frantically at each breaking sea; and overhead the gulls wheeled, shrilly screaming.

We saw at once that something unusual had

THE ROTE

happened. Shubael Spurling drove straight to the nearest squad of men, prominent among whom he recognized a young fellow frequently going on shares in old Skipper Pelatiah's little schooner. Although uncommonly heavily clad in thick coat and knit muffler, this young man struck me at once as looking pinched and cold.

"What about this wrack business we hear tell of? Where does she lay to?" Shubael demanded immediately.

"She give up only just a short spell since," the young man said. "The mastheads was showing all the morning off here, nigh in range with the bell."

"What one d'ye call her?" asked Shubael earnestly.

"Why, the old Palm, of course," said the other. "She's all the one to get picked up this time, so fur as ever I know."

"Palm be jiggered!" Shubael exclaimed irritably. "Shut up your tomfoolery, and talk

THE ROTE

some kind of sense, will you! The Palm come in last evening, to my knowing."

"My God, skipper! don't you really know yet?" the white-faced young fellow cried. "We was running her for home last night, and wearing nothing only a close-reefed foresail, with the sheet chock to the rigging at that! It blowed a livin' gale o' wind, and was shut in just as thick-a-snow outside as ever you see it in God's world. We made a grain too fur to the east'ard, and Old Aaron up and broke on us fit to pitchpole the ablest big Georges-man that ever sailed out of Cape Ann! It piled aboard all of ten foot deep over the stern, and wiped the five of us off'n her clip and clean —"

"Godfrey mighty, you!" broke in Shubael, his face flushing in downright anger; "I cal'-late you'll do, young feller, by the jumping Judas I do, now! You'll make out to hold your end up, every time. Let me just tell you what; you'd full better hire right out for

THE ROTE

one of these play-actors, in room of heaving away your time going haddicking out of here no longer! Next thing, maybe you'll be telling us how all the rest-part but you was drowned, won't ye?"

For answer, the young man swallowed hard, and nodded his head.

"Oho, I thought likely," said Shubael, with a grim smile. "All goners but you, every mother's son of 'em, you claim! Kind of rubbing it in, to take and lose the whole kit of 'em that way, wa'n't it? Maybe, now, you would n't mind just telling of me how comes it Uncle Pelly is home there to Number Four this same Christmas mornin'!"

"How comes what?" the other asked, in a puzzled way.

"I say, while you're at it, turn to and tell us how it was that the old sir never passed in his checks, too, in this 'ere scand'lous bad scrape of yours!"

"Old man Pel'tiah Spurling stood to the



A TANGLED MASS OF WRECKAGE

THE ROTE

tiller hisself the time that sea hove us nigh end over end," the young fellow said solemnly, while Skipper Shubael stared him in the face, angry and incredulous. "After we was all washed off'n her, him and me was all the ones to catch hand-holt again. Him and me gripped holt of the weather rail till she went out from under, and the very last words ever the old sir spoke he says like this, 'I been going out of this Cove risin' seventy year now, and this is the first time ever God A'mighty shut the door plumb in my face when it come night-time!' The next secont a master great comber fell atop of us, and I never knowed another living thing till they fetched me to in Cap'n Futtock's store over here."

"John Ed Grommet!" spoke Shubael Spurling sternly; "if ever I wanted to take and pick me the biggest reg'lar built, out and out, A No. 1 liar that ever yet drawed the breath of life to this Cove, I would n't have fur to

THE ROTE

seek, now, sure 's ever the tide ebbs and flows!
I cal'late you've got the nerve to stand right
up in your boots with some fool-lie on your
blame' tongue if 't was the day of judgment;
but by the Lord, I want you should under-
stand this time good and plain that I see Uncle
Pel'tiah home there not two hours' time since!
I see him and passed the time o' day along of
him, too, and what's more, the doctor here
seen him, and Jason Kentle, and your own
cousin, Thomas Grommet, they seen him
the very same time, going down acrosst his
mowin' field to the hollow. Leave it right
direct to you, doctor, if that ain't God's own
truth I'm telling!"

But before I could speak a great shout broke
from the men behind us, and, turning quickly,
we saw a tangled mass of wreckage borne in
at racehorse speed upon the crest of an im-
mense combing sea. A luminous, greenish
light flashed for an instant through the great,
toppling wave, and, as it fell with deafening

THE ROTE

roar upon the resonant shingle, the body of Skipper Pelatiah Spurling was pitched headlong in a wild rush of hissing foam, almost at the feet of his relative.

II

THE TWO CHANTY-MEN

II

THE TWO CHANTY-MEN

OF late years, in the fall, as soon as pollock are reported in any considerable number on the Big Bumbo Ground, Skipper Job Gaskett finds means to communicate the fact to his early shipmate, Abram Kentle, of distant Dogfish Point. White-haired Abram, who has but lately returned after many years' absence, then rolls up a "shift" of clothes in an oilskin suit, and with the bundle under his arm betakes himself down the old post road to the house of his friend at Killick Cove. In anticipation of this now annual visit, Skipper Job has his drag-boat and gear in readiness, and for some time both follow the example of many others in the town, and devote themselves to laying in a winter's supply of fish.

THE TWO CHANTY-MEN

Starting away from home at the usual early hour one mild morning, dearth of suitable bait and a failure of the wind so delayed their return that darkness shut down before they again reached the mouth of the broad stream, just inside of which lay Killick Cove. By this time a dense fog had rolled in from the sea, and encountering the strong ebb-tide out of the river, they were obliged to anchor. After a dish of hot tea in the cuddy, the disappointed fishermen lighted their pipes, and fell to pacing that small portion of deck remaining between kid-boards, hogshead tubs, and like clutter of the little craft. On the forward rigging, around a smoky riding-light, thickly studded drops of water sparkled against an inky background. Through the lantern's yellow glimmer the thick fog solemnly sifted past, and under the boat's bow fast swirling eddies of the rushing ebb lapped with stealthy trickle.

“How like the mischeef this tide doos empt

THE TWO CHANTY-MEN

to-night, you!" said Skipper Gaskett. "It must lack all of two hours' time to low-water slack yit. I do wisht we could saved our tide in home this afternoon, for I cal'lated to foot it acrosst to the Crick and try to pick me a bucket of cockles off'n the flats so 's to piecen out our bait to-morrow. There's times, you know, when seem's though pollock would n't look at nothin' else unless 't *is* cockles."

"Pollock is consid'ble partial to cockles, no two ways about that," said Abram Kentle. "Talkin' of going acrosst to the Crick, though, I wonder is there ary one of them Crick Bowses left over there at this day o' the world? Ezry Bowse was in the old Nonesuch the fust time ever we went off-shore, ye rec'lect."

"Yes, I know, but you hain't need look for ary Bowse alive to this Cove these twenty year and more," Job Gaskett replied. "It's some sing'lar, too, the way the whole kit of them Crick Bowses has made out to be

THE TWO CHANTY-MEN

drownded and killt off. There 's nothin' only the cellar-hole left of the old home-place over there now'days."

"I want to know ef they 're all hands on 'em goners," Abram said. "This 'ere Ezry was called the best chanty-man ever trod a ratline aboard ship."

"Oh, complete, Ezry was, and no mistake!" the skipper assented. "He could n't be beat noways, when it come to chantyin'. Ezry was all the one of the boys that ever come back to the old home-place there. After all the rest-part of the fambly was gone, he come back from sea one time, and lived over there all soul alone till he got through."

"Sho, you!" said Abram Kentle. "Ezry he'd been off-shore in square-riggers ever sence he fust commenced to go, and I know 't was seldom ever you 'd hear the likes of him for chantyin'. Him and old Sammy Futtock was called by all odds the smartest pair o' chanty-men ever went out of this river."

THE TWO CHANTY-MEN

“Nothin’ on two legs that ever went out of here could commence to tetch ’em, now that ’s a fact!” said Job. “You come to take it ashore here of a morning when we’ll say a brand, spangin’ new ship laid to anchor, with a full crew of young bucks, every mother’s son on ’em from right ’round this Cove, like ’s not; you take it the morning she cal’lated to git under way, and ef it did n’t sound some beauty-some to hear them old chanties acrosst the river, then I would n’t never say so! Why, them days, you know, they’d have to commence heavin’ on the win’lass with handspikes same’s early this morning, and in this deep water prob’ly it would be hard onto noon-time afore ever they was hove short, with the boys chantyin’ stiddy the whole time!

“ ‘Way you, Rio!

Away you, Rio!

Then fare you well, my bonnie young girl,

We’re bound to the Rio Grande!’ ”

roared Skipper Gaskett, while Abram Kentle joined in with a series of quavering wails.

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“Seem’s though I’d give a finger jest to hear one of them A No. 1 old chanties again. By fire, but would n’t it seem something like, though! You let Ezry Bowse or Sammy Futtock, ary one, strike up ‘Storm along, Stormy,’ or ‘Santy Anna,’ or ‘Blow, boys, blow,’ or some other of them old favorytes, and the rest part of the crew would come down with the chorus fit to take you chock off’n your feet!” And again fired by the recollection of these old-time sea ditties, Job Gaskett once more burst forth:—

“‘Blow, my bullies, I long to hear you.

Blow, boys, blow!

Blow, my bullies, I come to cheer you.

Blow, my bully boys, blow!’

“Yes sir-ee! There was a slue of them chanties, and a reg’lar-built smart chanty-man was a consid’ble big herb aboard ship in them days. He’d get more work outen the men a-chantyin’ than ever the mates could commence to.”

“I guess he would *so!*” Abram Kentle said

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decidedly. "I been aboard vessel where seem's though the men could n't pull a pound's heft without they had a chanty at every hand's turn. Why, take it the time you and me was youngsters aboard the old Nonesuch, out of here; about how long would it took to heave short unless'n we had chantyin'? Set-fire, I cal'late the kelps would growed ten foot long the whole bigness of her bottom afore ever she 'd been clear of this river!"

"You might jes' soon undertook to do away with grub them days, as them same old chanty-men," declared Job. "The breed is all died out, though, at this day o' the world. Folks 'round here would gawk some to see old Ezry Bowse come rollin' down along the road now'-days, would n't they? I tell ye he was a proper old deep-water feller ef ever I sot eye on a one in my life! D'ye rec'lect the big full-rigged ship in Injy-ink on the breast of him? He'd allus wear his shirt collar hove wide open in all weathers, so's you'd catch sight of

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that ship's royals and t'gallant-yards jest showing above his tie."

"Solid Injy-ink him and Sammy was, their whole bigness, same 's the bulk of them old shell-backs," said Abram. "What ever become of old Sammy Futtock, anyways?" he added.

"Why," replied the skipper, "him and Ezry lays together chock down in the furtherest sou'west corner of the old Oakum Hill buryin'-ground."

"Sho, you!" said Abram. "What possessed folks to take and lay 'em so fur in from the road as all that, in room of down nigher home somewheres?"

"Well, the way it looks to me, there wa'n't no great call to lay 'em clean away down in there, as I can see," Job said. "They's mostly Advents lays in there back of the hill, you know. Ezry and Sammy had allus went together aboard ship their whole lives, and being as they kind of took up along with them

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Advents a short spell afore they come to git through, why seem's though them same Advents turned to and laid 'em neck and neck one alongside t' other in back of the hill. Betwixt you and me and the windlass-bitts, though, seems's ef they never laid none too easy in there, neither."

"Sho, now!" Abram said. "I ain't been a-nigh the place sence I was the bigness of a trawl-kag, but I know that come to git in that fur, you're handy-by to Heron Swamp. Ezry Bowse was allus counted a master weeked old creatur', but for all that, I s'pose maybe he'd full lievser lay in back of the meetin'-house down to the Cove."

"Jes' so eggsactly! Now you've hit it for one thing!" cried Job. "I want my folks should take and lay me somewheres handy-by to the shore; some place where I'll be apt to git the rote good and plain by spells, anyways. How'd *you* love to lay clean away in there to the norrard of the hill, Abram? leave alone

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being chucked clean down in the corner there, where take it spring-times, you'll go plumb to the knees, every clip! Do you cal'late ever you'd love to lay chock down in there, and hearken to nothin' in God's world unless'n it is the frogs a-peepin' in amongst them cat-tails all around ye, jest only one stiddy yip?"

"I don't want to lay in no sich shape!" said Abram Kentle positively.

"No more doos them two, then!" the skipper rejoined. "When them that's got through lay real good and easy, d'ye call it anyways nach'al for 'em to up and travel by nights? Would n't you sooner cal'late they'd stay put, in room of scullin' round this river night-times, same's they will by spells?"

"Any one would suppose'n, now that's a fact. Did ever you run a-foul on 'em yourself?" asked Abram. "Most the whole of you Gasketts allus was great on all sich works."

"Time and again I've heard them two chantyin' on this river by nights sence they got

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through, and I ain't all the one to hear 'em at it, neither," Job answered. "What's more," he added, "'t is allus called a proper good forerunner of a heavy breeze o' wind consid'ble quick follerin', too."

"Well," said Abram, "I'm knowing to it there's any God's quantity of sich works going on all the time, of course. The thing of it is, though, some sees 'em or else hears 'em, and some ain't made so's to. That ain't sayin' but what the works is there, jest the same."

"You can bate they're there!" Job said. "I seen a raft on 'em in my day, too. But there, you, there's a plenty more reasons why them two old reynucks don't lay easy. I cal'late for one thing they was most too weeked ever to lay good and easy anywheres. Talk about your drinkin' rum and swearin' and cussin';—don't never say a word! I been shipmates along o' them that could swear and cuss jest a few, but you come to take Ezry or Sammy, ary one, and seems's though they

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could n't so much as open their mouths without they'd tear off a big chunk like! Scandalous weeked, them two allus was. Prob'ly you've heard tell the way Ezry finally turned to and prayed for a rainstorm that time, ain't ye never?"

"No, sir; it's tol'ble sure I never heard tell of *him* praying for nothin'!" declared Abram Kentle.

"Oh, for sure he did up and pray too, that once, but I guess that was all the prayer ever he got off, and that one was a plenty," the skipper said. "I'll have to tell ye about that scrape, then, seeing how I got drawn into it a little mite myself. Guess likely 't was the time you was away so long. Ezry and Sammy, you know, allus was the biggest kind of chummies, and cal'lated to hang together through thick and thin. After they'd got consid'ble well along in years, the two on 'em took a notion to quit going, and stop ashore the rest-part of their lives. They had enough laid by to

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rub along with like, and so Ezry he fetched his dunnage up to the old home-place there, and commenced to keep house all soul alone; that is, without no women-folks to do for him.

“Sammy Futtock he did have some cousins or something left, that lived clean away out back here amongst the alders in Number Two Deestrick, and seem’s though they would have give him a home and welcome, but all the place in town where he’d put in much of any time was over to Ezry Bowse’s, there. Sammy’s folks, ye see, was every one strict Advents. Them Advents allus growed thick as blackberries all up through Number Two, ever sence Adam was a plague-gone oakum-boy, I cal’late. Waal, seems’s though the women-folks in pertikler was possessed to coax Sammy to tend out on them meetings of theirn, and finally to convert him over, and all sich works, but Sammy he never appeared to have the least mite of use for them kind, and they could n’t seem to hitch hosses wuth a cent.

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Ef ever they did coax him to stop along on 'em a spell, Ezry Bowse allus would take and climb up a-top of a big high laidge o' rocks right handy-by to his house, and commence a-chantyin' 'Rio' so's you'd hear him the whole bigness of the Cove. The lungs of him was for all the world same's a pair of black-smith's belluses, and same time there was allus something ter'ble drawring like to his voice, so's folks would heave aside whatever they was doing of, and hearken to her for all they was wuth. He'd turn to and shin up a-top of that big laidge where t'was good and sightly, and then he'd strike up chantyin', —

“‘We've a bully ship and a bully crew;

Way you, Rio!

A bucco mate and cap'n too;

And away to Rio!’

Set-fire, you! Time he was through with the fust verse, you'd hear Sammy Futtock answering of him down through the hollows betwixt them hills from 'most up to Heron Swamp: —

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“‘Up aloft the yards must go,
And away to Rio!’

Mighty quick after, down Sammy would come hisself, snappin’ and cracklin’ through them bushes same’s ary wild creatur’, making a bee-line acrosst lots for Ezry’s place, and then the pair would turn to and have one of their reg’lar old times together, singing chan-ties and drinkin’ red rum till they could n’t so much as set up.”

“Sho, now!” said Abram. “Seems’s though Sammy cal’lated to slip and git under way soon’s ever Ezry signalized him, Advents or no Advents!”

“Good land, yes; them two was bound to raise ructions there to Ezry’s place, anyways you could rig it. Master weeked, they allus was. Why, one time there was a whole kit of them Advents got together along with the Elder, and trooped it down to Ezry’s, cal’latin’ to lay theirselves right out, and see ef they could n’t fetch the old reynuck to his

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oats someways or 'nother. Elder he turned to and opened up a-prayin', and he prayed and he prayed, till bimeby his throat give out on him complete, so's he could n't fetch another yip to save him. Ezry he sot there as perlite as ever you please, and they said wanted Elder should turn to and have a drop along of him, by way of helping out his throat like! Well, next thing, all them dozen or twenty women Advents hopped up and commenced a-singin' the very pootiest they knowed, but be jiggered ef afore they was anyways nigh through, Ezry did n't turn to and start in chantyin' 'Sally Brown' so's to drown out the whole batch of 'em clip and clean! 'Sally Brown,' ye know, ain't cal'lated for no prayer-meetin's by a jugful; consekense was them Advents finally concluded they'd full better quit, and jest give Ezry up for a bad egg like."

"Noways to blame, neither," commented Abram Kentle.

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“Fur from it,” the skipper said. “Seems’s though the weeked old reynuck could make out to set there and behave hissself kind of half decent while Elder was to work prayin’, but soon’s ever it come to singin’, he cal’lated to take a hand hissself, and give ’em some p’int. Well, only a short spell after, he took a notion to make him a garden over there, though prob’ly he knowed no more how to make truck grow than what I do, and by fire! what I *dunno* in regards to it would fill a book; but anyways, he started in with a garden-patch that spring, and they all said kept her wed out nice as a pin for a spell, but the way it worked that year, we never got one sol’tary drop of rain till fall. The wells every one went bone dry; brooks was dry as puff-balls everywheres, and all the way in God’s world ever folks got so much as a turn o’ water was to take and haul it in bar’ls from a little b’ilin’ spring clean down in the thick of the swamp.

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“Well, Ezry he worked same’s a nailer trying to save his garden that season, but bimeby when he come to see every namable thing in her going back on him complete, why, he commenced to take on horrid. I’ve heard tell the way he’d stomp ’round his place there, a-swearin’ and cussin’ fit to take your breath, till finally be jiggered, ef the old creatur’ did n’t take a notion to try prayin’ for rain hissself, the way they was all hands doing of the whole bigness of the county. There was an uncle of mine had been off traipesin’ through the alders for his cow that day, and he overheard Ezry at it there, down in amongst his dry beans and truck. The old sir allus allowed Ezry says like this,—startin’ in at the fust commencement kind of easy and coaxin’ like, for him,—‘Now look a-here you, Lord!’ ’s he, ‘I tell you jest how bad off I be. Here I been workin’ same’s ary nigger-slave to keep this ’ere garden all wed out in good shape, and I been luggin’ turns o’ water

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for these tormented beans and all the rest-part of the truck nigh the whole summer long, till there ain't a drop I can beg or borry this side of Heron Swamp. Now,' 's he, 'I can't stand everything, no more 'n a stone-drag, and I'll be keel-hauled ef ever I'll turn to and lug water that fur, not for no garden ! The heft o' the stuff is gone for already, but I want you should turn to right off quick 's ever you can, and give us a good old soaker of a rain-storm afore it's too late to save a thing. I don't mean,' 's he, 'no plague-gone fog-mull with dreeblin' little showers by spells; a stiddy fortni't of them kind would n't be no objct with 'most every namable thing I got here all horned up same 's a burnt boot, but,' 's he, 'jest turn to and let her go by the hockshead-tub; give us something will be apt to strike in chock to the roots, no matter ef you blow a livin' gale o' wind doin' of it!' And then to top off with, he up and says like this: 'Now, Lord, ef you ain't a mind to do this 'ere inside

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of twenty-four hours' time, blame' ef I won't allus think hard of ye, and no mistake about it!'"

"The blasphemis old reynuck!" exclaimed Abram Kentle, suddenly stopping his pacing. "That's wuss 'n his swearin' and sayin' over in the fust place. Do you cal'late, though, ever he did really turn to and talk that way?"

"Cal'late?" repeated Job. "No, I don't cal'late nothin' about it; I'm *knowing* to it that's how he talked it! The old sir has told me it prob'ly a hundred times afore now."

"Well, but how about the rainstorm?" asked Abram. "Did she come?"

"I ruther guess she made out to show up, ef I was any jedge!" the skipper said. "Enough rain come to lay the dust, anyways, and some to spare. I kind of mistrusted there was an air o' wind come with her too, for we busted 'most a brand-new mains'l aboard the Myrtie Gaskett that night, and had a dirty

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squeak of it to find the turf at all. That's hossin' ahead a grain too fast, though. You rec'lect old Tildy Purdick's tavern up river in them days, do ye?"

"Lord, yes," Abram replied. "Tildy's place had consid'ble of a hard name long afore I left' round here."

"Well," continued Job, "it's safe to say it never improved no great sight afterwards. You take it in the fall o' the year, when there'd be a big fleet laying in here to anchor, and there was likely to be some tall old shindies up there by nights. Ezry and Sammy allus cal'lated to go up there by boat jest about once in every so often, so's to fill their little rum-kags, and same time fetch home all they was able to lug un'neath their jackets;—'twas seldom ever they'd forget that part of their errant, now, I tell ye. Old Tildy she allus seemed to have a soft spot in her heart for them two, and she'd cal'late for 'em not to start downstream for home without the

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tide had pinched a couple o' foot, and was runnin' out strong enough to fetch 'em down along no matter ef they was drunk as lords, which you can bate they most gin'ally was.

"Down river them two would come right on the strength of the ebb in Ezry's old baskit of a wherry, a-singin' them sea chanties jest one stiddy string. By spells maybe one on 'em would grab holt of an oar and go through the motions of rowing a grain, but the pair was allus and forever chantyin' so's everybody would be knowing to it they was coming down along, quick's ever the tide pinched off, and had begun to empt in good shape.

"Old Cap'n Pel'tiah Roundturn he kep' store them days ye rec'lect, right handy-by the shore, and the old sir was one of the real old 'square-riggers' hisself. Ezry and Sammy had been along of him in quite a few ships out of here, and the cap'n sot a great store by 'em, too. He allus allowed better sailor-men than them two, when they was sober, seldom ever

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trod a ratline, and so the old sir was in the habit of watchin' out for 'em like, when they come down river three sheets in the wind with rum, and ef they was too setfired drunk to make a landing theirselves, he 'd send a boat out to gaft onto 'em, and tow 'em in to his shore. He had a plaguy good heart into him, old Cap'n Pelly did, and I 've knowed him to set up in his store half the night waiting to hear that chantyin' coming down river with the ebb. Then some one would go and fetch 'em in as I say, abreast the store somewheres; heave their humdurgan out on the beach so's they would n't strike adrift again, and ef it wa'n't too late or stormy-like, they 'd leave 'em be in their boat to sober off fit to go home.

"There them two old shell-backs would set sometimes till long after the tide had dreened clean away down and left 'em stranded high and dry, a-chantyin' away as chipper as ever you see, and never realizin' a mite where they was to. The very last time ever I seen 'em

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setting there that way, I rec'lect well they was tunin' up with 'Haul on the Bowline,'—you know how we'd have that chanty to set up on the weather-brace by, and quick's ever we'd sing out 'Haul,' all hands would buckle down together. Well, sir, so Ezry and Sammy sot there all dry on them flats that time a-chantyin' jest only 'Haul on the Bowline,' and nothin' else.

“ ‘Haul on the Bowline,
Our packet is a-rollin’;
Haul on the Bowline,
The Bowline — *Haul!*’

they'd give it to her in proper good shape. Each one on 'em had an oar over the side, and quick's ever they'd said 'The Bowline—*Haul!*' be jiggered ef the pair would n't lay right back on them thwarts and dig their oars into them mudflats so spiteful 't would start the clams a-squirtin' for all they was wuth, everywheres inside a dozen boats' lengths!"

“Sho, now! Must put ye in mind of a couple of old nach'als,” remarked Abram.

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“So they did, for all the world, you!” the skipper said. “But what I’m coming at, only a short spell after Ezry Bowse had prayed that way in his garden, him and Sammy started up river on another one of them high-jinks o’ theirs to Tildy Purdick’s place. They got filled up chock-a-block, same’s usual, but seems’s though it wa’n’t high-water slack till past night-time that day, and so they never got started down river till consid’ble late. It had been hermin’ up thick and greasy for foul weather all day, and by sundown shet in dungeon thick-a-fog here in the river. Old Cap’n Pelly he’d been called out of town quite sudden by sickness, though seems’s ef he left word with quite a few to look after Ezry and Sammy that night. What’s everybody’s business ain’t nobody’s, ye know, though; there was plenty folks heard ’em chantyin’ down along a-nigh midnight, but everybody cal’lated somebody else besides him was tending to ’em, and so betwixt the lot them two pore old fools come down on the

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strength of the ebb in a black dungeon o' fog, and in room of stopping to the Cove, away they went chock out to sea, a-chantyin' same 's ever."

"Sho, you!" said Abram Kentle feelingly. "Rum will down the best on 'em in time, won't it?"

"Never knowed it to fail in the long run, now that's gospil truth," Job said. "I was bound home from Canso that time, with a trip o' fish in the old Myrtie. At daylight we was up abreast Dogfish P'int, but then she shet in on us, and held so plaguy mod'rit that come midnight and all the fur ever we'd got was off here a piece to the s'utheast; stark calm, and thick-a-fog as ever you see it sence Adam cut his eye-teeth. All to once we took the wind and rain together in a master heavy squall from the east'ard, so's afore I could get the muslin off'n her, the mains'l split from head to foot. Finally, the wind backened in plumb to the no'theast and pricked on so scand'lous tough

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I took and hove her to with her head off-shore, in hopes the fog would scale so 's we 'd git holt of the light on the Shags or something. All of a sudden, close aboard of us to wind'ard, there come this voice a-chantyin',—

“ ‘I wisht I was old Stormy's son ;
I'd give my sailors plenty o' rum !
Ay,— Storm along, Stormy !’

and in a secont's time that dinged old wherry, with Ezry and Sammy setting chock in her bottom, was blowed down right agin our weather rail with a clip that stove in her whole broadside.”

“Spillt 'em in good shape, then?” Abram said.

“Why, nach'ally. 'T was jest only bull-luck that ever we was able to resicue 'em too, and Sammy in pertikler was nigh spoke for. Sammy he'd sobered off enough so 's to turn to and bale like a good one, and that's all the way ever the boat had kep a-top o' water at all, for both oars was lost, and Ezry he

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would n't do a thing without it was to set there in a foot o' water, and chanty stiddy. Lord sakes! Water he ast for, and that's jest what he got, for besides the salt-water that come over 'em, it rained that time same as heavin' of it ker-chuck in your face by the draw-bucketful. We finally got holt of the light, and come into the harbor all right, but I dunno 's ever I was any tickleder to find a hole in the beach and git my anchors down than what I was that night, for it blowed fit to make a rabbit shed tears. Sammy Futtock, though, he was all broke up like, and never was his own self again. He ketched a fever, and after he come out of that, turned to and joined in along of them Advents; knocked off drinkin' complete, and finally, they said, coaxed Ezry into acting kind of respectable for a spell. Fust thing anybody knowed, though, he up and died all of a sudden, and quick 's ever Ezry learnt the news, he took a shock like, hisself, so 's the pair got through pretty much together, same's they

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lived. That's how they come to lay together chock in there back of Oakum Hill."

"Sho, you! Consid'ble of a little hist'ry, and no mistake," said Abram Kentle. "But you claim they're liable to chanty on this river by nights at this day o' the world, do ye?"

"'T ain't a year's time sence I heard 'em myself," said Job promptly. "Three times afore that I've been woke up by 'em to home there; three sep'rate times I've turned out of bed and hove up my window to hearken and make dead sure I wa' n't noways mistakened. Every time it's been ebb tide and thick-a-fog, and nigh's ever I could tell, it's allus been 'Storm along, Stormy' I heard. That's all the one ever they struck up the night they went adrift, accordin' to all tell, and mind ye, too, a heavy breeze o' wind has allus followed close in the wake of this same chantyin'. Now you take it last fall. For quite a spell the herring struck consid'ble thick here in the river, and there was a number of good dark nights when they'd

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rise to the torch in pretty fair shape. I rigged me up a torch one afternoon, and cal'lated to have a try at 'em in the eddy of Wrack Islant, along with old Uncle Fairway up the road there. After supper she shet in thick-a-fog, and the wind pretty nigh let go; 't was a proper good night to torch herring, and no mistake. We had n't but jest shoved off, when way out in the strength of the ebb, there come this chantyin' jes' same's I'd allus heard afore. Now by fire! thinks I to myself right off, I'm jest plague-gòne old fool enough to lay alongside that 'ere, and see who's who, and what's what! I knowed well it was liable to mean a gold watch or else a wooden leg, as the feller says, and as a gin'ral rule I don't never cal'late to go fur out of my way jest to lock horns along with them kind of things; same time, you un'stand, no more do I cal'late to put up with any great sight of crowdin' from 'em neither, and I see this time right off that with sich caterwaulin' every blame' herring in the

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river was like to be scairt into conniptions and skip. You know yourself, Abram, that ef you cal'late to torch by nights, you don't want to raise no great hue and cry about it.

"I'm jest as partial to chantyin' as the next one, and allus was, but come to have that shindy struck up the very secont I wanted to git me a herring or two was some aggravatin', and r'iled me up consid'ble. Uncle Fairway was too deaf to hear a thing, but I grabbed holt of the oars and give it to her for every pound I was wuth out into the tide, in hopes to head off them sounds, when be jiggered ef't wa'n't my luck to break a tholepin, and afore ever I could whittle me a one out, the tide had run this 'ere chantyin' chock out of hearing."

"Sho, you!" said Abram. "Seem's though your courage was good, ef you *was* lackin' in jedgment like. I never would advise ye to try and hold your breath till you got me into no sich works myself, for I'm satisfied to leave

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alone of 'em clip and clean! Come, here s
an air o' wind breezenin' up already; let's
we up killick and be out of this afore ever
them two come drifting down acrosst our bow
to-night!"

III

THE SEA-GLIN

III

THE SEA-GLIN

MANY years ago, when we were schoolboys together in a small suburb of Boston, I looked up to James Atherton as an intrepid navigator, sure to be classed with Cook and the best of them. It was well known among us admiring youngsters that Atherton had, in an amazing centreboard punt of his own construction, already compassed the stupendous six-mile stretch of open sea lying between Boston Harbor and Nahant Head. Furthermore, he boldly declared his intention, at no distant day, of letting her go down shore as far as Marblehead, come what might.

To be sure, James Atherton was less than three years older than myself; yet, at our tender age, something of the same principle

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which renders the inch on a man's nose of such consequence, naturally compelled among us younger lads the homage due a personage of so much more experience.

Then, too, even at that early date, Atherton had already achieved great local renown through the supposed possession of wondrous mystic powers which the then universally popular contrivance known as *planchette* enabled him to display with the most telling effect. I myself, though often undoubtedly awed by Atherton's frequent weird séances held in various darkened kitchens of the neighborhood, could do nothing whatever with *planchette*, and, emboldened by broad daylight, at times even ventured to question the supernatural character of its performances.

But with the whole matter of boat-sailing, no one could possibly be more infatuated than I; and to this overruling passion for the water was no doubt due a certain condescending

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interest which James Atherton soon began to show in my affairs.

While ice still fringed the flooded claypit of a brickyard in the outskirts of our town, I had clandestinely launched a boat in the shape of a wooden sink recently discarded from a neighbor's house. Fired with the ardent desire of ultimately rivaling James Atherton in his most thrilling single-handed voyage to Nahant, I spent a water-soaked, yet blissful, half-holiday paddling about in this new acquisition. On the next day, however, a high wind ruffled the turbid water into miniature billows, and when, figuratively speaking, in mid-ocean, my overloaded craft filled and miserably foundered under my feet, it became literally, and in double sense, a case of *sink* or swim. During the serious illness following this experience, Atherton frequently visited me, and from this period may be said to date the close friendship henceforth giving rise to boating trips on all possible occasions.

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Some time after my recovery, there moved into our town, from a small seaport of Maine, the family of Captain Eliphalet Gibbs. Captain Gibbs was said to be in command of a large bark engaged in foreign trade, a fact which, in the estimation of Atherton and myself, was alone no slight recommendation; but when, in addition, we became acquainted with his two exceedingly pretty and winsome daughters, the newcomers were indeed in high favor.

Many most delightful evenings were passed with Inez and Izetta Gibbs in their attractive parlor,—a room even now as vividly before my eyes as though I had left it only yesterday. It was the typical “front-room” of a prosperous Yankee shipmaster,—an unmistakable maritime apartment, once common enough in towns along our seaboard, but nowadays very seldom to be found.

Yet interesting as the strangely carved furniture and the numberless curios from all

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parts of the world undoubtedly were, to my friend and myself by far the most fascinating object in its contents was an elaborately framed oil painting of the captain's favorite vessel, which, carefully protected by mosquito netting, hung directly over the fantastic array on the marble mantelpiece. In oddly formed text this dashing and most cheerfully tinted work was prominently inscribed, —

“Barque *Two Sisters*, of Damariscotte, Eliphalet P. Gibbs, Master, Entering Havre, August 27, 1855.”

Captain Gibbs was once at some pains to explain that the substitution of a final “e” for an “a” in the word Damariscotta was an unfortunate error of the eminent foreign artist, which, provokingly enough, remained unnoticed until too late for rectification. In our minds, however, this trifling mistake only sufficed to give an additional over-sea charm to a masterpiece at which we gazed admiringly by the hour together. And despite the

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faulty orthography, the captain plainly took great pride in assuring us that each and every rope and spar was in its proper place, the standing-rigging faultlessly "set up" taut as fiddle-strings, and the running gear all perfectly in evidence, even to signal halyards the size of a cod-line. In fact, Captain Gibbs positively declared that no professional rigger could by any possibility have done a better job at painting.

During the too brief residence of the Gibbs family in the town, Atherton and I frequented the house with a devotion which I have since wondered if good Mrs. Gibbs herself wholly appreciated. Both the girls were musical to a marked degree, and both possessed strong, sweet voices. Izetta, with whom Atherton early became especially enamored, also soon developed astonishing gifts in the manipulation of *planchette*, and rarely an evening passed without adding to the already long list of inexplicable wonders in this direction.

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After such mysterious exercises, it was customary to enjoy an hour of singing, with accompaniment upon the cabinet organ.

Among the girls' songs was a favorite of romantic Izetta's, called "The Pilot's Bride," which Atherton in particular also admired greatly, and soon invariably requested her to sing. The sisters possessed neither written notes nor words of this really fine old sentimental ditty, which we understood had been taught them in early childhood by some relative; but so enraptured did James Atherton at length become over the plaintive melody so often sung for his especial benefit by Izetta Gibbs, that she was induced to write the music for him upon a large sheet of beribboned paper.

From information subsequently furnished me by his younger sister, it would seem that through persistent and ill-timed tooting of "The Pilot's Bride" upon the flageolet, James Atherton soon became for a period actually an object of derision in his family.

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But in something over two years after Captain Gibbs moved into the place he was lost, with his vessel, in a West Indian hurricane; and greatly to the regret of many friends the family felt obliged to give up their large house and to locate some distance inland, where the daughters hoped to be successful in poultry breeding.

Atherton and I were inconsolable over their departure. A fervid correspondence at once ensued, and continued with much regularity on the part of my friend and Izetta Gibbs at least, until her untimely death a few years later. For various reasons, letters between Inez and me gradually grew less frequent, and finally ceased altogether. Not long after this I learned in a roundabout way that she was married, and with her mother had moved to parts unknown.

It seemed indeed a cruel fate which, half a dozen years subsequently, left so thoroughly bred a web-foot as James Atherton hopelessly

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stranded in a large city of the far West. More favored by fortune in this respect at least, I had found occupation on our northeastern seaboard, where, happy in the ownership of a small sloop yacht, I was frequently able to gratify a craving for salt water which the course of years by no means lessened. During the decade following, Atherton and I regularly exchanged letters, while, having no family of his own, it became a habit with him to flee east nearly every summer from the scorching plains, which he declared the Almighty never intended for human habitation, and cruise with me for a month upon the northern coast, with all the zest of our earlier years.

My wife, who, by the way, was none other than Atherton's sister, held fast to a pet theory that her brother's bachelorhood was wholly attributable to his early deep affection for Izetta Gibbs; but while then not so well assured of this fact myself, I had long been aware that he

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was in those days much harder hit than I or any of his friends realized at the time. From talks during his most enjoyable visits, though to a greater extent through letters, I was also aware that Atherton had systematically continued a line of investigation no doubt originally suggested by the now obsolete *planchette*. I knew that he had become greatly interested in psychological studies of one sort and another, and though perhaps not belonging strictly to the rank and file of so-called Spiritualists, fully believed himself endowed with what those of this tenet would probably term "unusual mediumistic powers." In long letters, on several occasions, he urged upon me the importance of various undoubted communications he had received from departed friends, as affording most solacing proof positive of life to come.

However, this whole matter of communications was one in which I felt little interest. Certainly my own innate belief in the absolute

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surety of a future existence was not in the least to be strengthened by physical manifestations of any sort, — in fact, it seemed to me but a form of materialism which asked for such proof. Always incredulous as to the possibility of these much-talked-of messages, I considered time during my old friend's visits much too precious for their useless discussion.

But to proceed towards the main object of this narrative. Some dozen years since there came a period of business troubles which, through several seasons, prevented Atherton from making the usual pilgrimage to his native region of fogs and salt sea breezes. After three years of bitter disappointment to us both, however, he at length wrote in the spring, expressing hope of starting east; yet the summer passed, and business ties still held him fast. September and October came and went, with the season continuing uncommonly mild, and encouraged by Atherton's frequent letters, I still kept the Gulnare at her moor-

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ings in our sheltered harbor, though knowing well that we now escaped fierce gales and winter weather through grace alone.

At this time Atherton seemed wellnigh desperate. He was starving, actually and literally starving, he said, for the smell of the sea, for the heavenly sound of its swash along the Gulnare's glistening bilges in a fresh breeze, and for the whistle of wind in the rigging. By the salt blood of all our Viking forebears, he adjured me almost daily not to haul the yacht up for the winter, but to hold off, and still hold off a bit longer!

At length, on the 20th of November, a telegram came, saying that he was really on the point of starting; and almost immediately upon his arrival, final preparations were begun for our long-deferred cruise to the eastward.

Though still comparatively mild, there was no mistaking the season on the particularly breezy morning of our start. Rain had fallen during the night, but the wind had worked

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into the northwest, and the weather was fast turning cold. Before launching the yacht's tender to go on board, we were obliged to rid her of ice, into which was frozen a thick matting of dead leaves, — always a portentous mixture, which, in my case, to look upon is enough to induce the thickest flannels. By comparison, a genuine midwinter snowbank befits the “tropical scenes” embellishing the geographies of our grammar-school days.

Heavy masses of semi-stratified leaden clouds only now and then allowed slants of feeble sunshine to light the gray waters into long stretches of unwonted yellow-green, amidst which the racing whitecaps gleamed under the cold northwester in a manner most suggestive of close reefs.

But it is not my intention to inflict in detail a log of our unseasonable cruise, eventful though it proved. Enough to say that, having gone east as far as Machiasport without serious discomfort, thanks to a good fire and plenty

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of clothing, we had begun to work our little craft homeward again, when, in preparing kindling with a hatchet, I was clumsy enough to cut my left hand quite deeply. The doctor who dressed the wound forbade use of the hand for many days to come, and in this predicament we felt obliged to ship an extra man. After several unsuccessful attempts in other directions, the choice fell upon Captain Daniel Murdock, of Moosabec Reach, a well-seasoned mariner, who assured us that he had been master of a coaster "ever since he was the bigness of a draw-bucket."

"Cap'n Dan'l" was a nervous, rather vacuous-faced little man, with watery blue eyes, scanty hair, and straggling chin whiskers which utterly failed to disguise the fact that he had no chin worth mentioning, while an immense flaring-crowned blue yachting cap, apparently several sizes too large, gave him a painfully top-heavy appearance. Before the first week was out, it became evident that, in Cap'n

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Dan'l's cheerful view, each cloudy day was to be classed as "stormy," while all pleasant days were simply "weather-breeders" of most ominous import. Doubtless this peculiar habit of mind accounted for the fact that in his case an intense desire to enter every good harbor reached was only equaled by an inborn, deep-rooted aversion to leaving it.

As it happened, there was little need to call upon the captain for assistance in handling the craft. He helped to get under way, of course, but I chose to manage the cooking, and Atherton could seldom be induced to relinquish the pleasure of steering for any length of time. As a rule, reefs were kept permanently tied in, so that, for the most part, our hired crew was able to divide his time between dismal weather predications and lugubrious recitals illustrating the madness of running by harbors at this season of the year.

Fair and cold — though often somewhat too boisterous — weather attended us to the west-

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ward as far as the Fox Island Thoroughfare. Here anchor was dropped one evening, shortly after a genuine Turnerian sunset, which in its frenzied arrangement of strangely gorgeous colors Cap'n Dan'l eagerly seized upon at once as presaging an immediate gale of wind "fit to yank all hell out by the roots."

But the next morning seemed to offer a fairly good chance for proceeding across the Western Bay, at least, though Captain Murdock continued his disquieting forecasts with intense earnestness. Entirely apart from the late threatening sunset, he called attention to the startling fact that this was the fateful third morning of heavy white frost on deck; that last night the water was remarkably phosphorescent, or, to use his common expression, "*fired* for an easterly;" from outside came an ominous boom of the rote; the moon, too, was waning; but most alarming of all was the frightful continuation of fine weather lately experienced,—in the unhappy captain's esti-

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mation simply an appalling succession of "weather-breeders" soon to be most dearly reckoned for. In short, though on general principles opposed to leaving harbor at all, on this particular hazy autumnal morning the good man considered such a move as flying in the face of Providence, and begged so to go on record.

We started with a gentle northerly breeze which, light as it was, still carried the chill of the snow already lying deep in the spruce woods but a few miles back from the coast; and dimmed by gradually thickening haze overhead, at noonday the half-hearted rays of the sun had scarcely begun to affect the thick coating of frost underfoot.

Far up Penobscot Bay, abreast the faint outline of the towering Camden Hills, three or four lumber-loaded schooners, wing-and-wing, were slowly drifting down with the ebb tide. In explanation of such apparent temerity, Cap'n Dan'l stated that these vessels were

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doubtless the last ones of the season to load in the Penobscot River, and that, fearful of being frozen in for the winter, their masters were forced to take advantage of favoring wind and tide in order to reach the commodious harbor of Rockland. At this time of year, and with a gale of wind unmistakably brewing, not a man of them, the captain solemnly declared, would pass through the Mussel-Ridges ; much less shape a course out clear of Monhegan that day.

“ *Them* fellers,” he said significantly, “ has learnt a thing or two afore now ! ”

All day the weather continued to thicken steadily ; but though an increasing ground swell white-fringed the shore with tumbling surf, the wind held moderate from the northward, — so moderate, indeed, that reaching our favorite anchorage of Townsend was early seen to be improbable. However, there were several intermediate opportunities for finding shelter in a small craft such as ours ; and

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though now convinced that a comfortable haven would no doubt soon be desirable, we still fanned along prettily. Atherton's allotted vacation time was nearly expired, and if we were to lie storm-bound for perhaps several days, so much the more reason for improving the present favorable slant of wind.

Leaving the Mussel-Ridge Channel, Seal Harbor was voted too lonesome ; Tennant's Harbor lay wholly open to the northeast, and even Cap'n Dan'l had no hankering for it under present conditions. Herring Gut seemed most likely to bring us up ; but when off its entrance the wind showed signs of taking a fresh hold, and to the utter consternation of Captain Murdock we decided to keep on through Fisherman's Gap, and make at least a bid for Townsend, even if obliged to compromise with some little nook on dim Pemaquid.

To those unacquainted with this region it may be said that Fisherman's Gap is an ex-

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tremely narrow and short passage through a chain of rocky, gull-haunted islands and ledges stretching seaward several miles from the mainland. By use of this contracted channel those familiar with its dangers may materially shorten the route east or west, though strangers and large craft commonly avoid it. Entering the Gap, on one side lies Mistake Island, a low mass of gray rocks supporting only the slightest growth of stunted spruces ; opposite is the odd-looking islet known as "Night-Cap," an absolutely bare ledge of deeply fissured granite rising to a height of perhaps twenty-five feet above high-water mark.

North and south range numerous other desolate islands, among which the endless rote of the churning sea is broken only by the gulls' weird cries, or the dismal bleating of a few unfortunate sheep. Many detached shoals and sunken ledges extend in all directions, and of these only such are buoyed as obstruct the immediate entrance to the Gap.

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Commonly cruising outside of these dangerous barriers to navigation, it had been several years since Atherton and I last passed through this opening, and on approaching we were somewhat surprised to notice a tiny dwelling-house upon the extreme apex of the barren rock called "Night-Cap." Captain Daniel Murdock, in profound disgust at having passed the snug harbor of Herring Gut, had some time previous turned into his berth below; and although both of us were anxious to learn if possible who had chosen so extraordinary a dwelling-place, it seemed on the whole best to postpone questioning the poor man until he might be in a happier frame of mind.

For some hours now the sky had been completely overcast, and from its watery blank of sullen gray, wholly devoid of both form and motion, snow or rain seemed imminent. Atherton at this time was idling with the tiller in a fickle breeze which again threatened to fail us, while I, as steward, off and

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on dodged below to the cook-room, where a choice fish-smother was in preparation.

Suddenly Atherton called me. "Here's an effect of light and shade for you!" he said. "Talk about sea-glins; you'll never get a better example than this now!"

As soon as possible I hastened on deck. Away out over the blurry horizon line at sea occurred a strange lifting of the sombre curtain extending overhead. Next the water glowed a nebulous streak of intensely luminous white, against which, as we slowly drifted past, every detail in the dark and rugged contour of the "Night-Cap" and its lonely little house rose in the immediate foreground with a vividness almost uncanny in its wonderful strength and distinctness.

We stood a few moments, intently watching this most striking effect, when a certain familiar odor admonished me that my smother was burning, and I hurried below once more.

"Great Cæsar! Come up here quick!" cried

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Atherton again, after the lapse of a few moments. "Come up quick, if you want to hear 'The Pilot's Bride' played on a fiddle!"

Again I hurried through the cabin, but before getting my head out of the companion-way he exclaimed, in a disappointed tone, "You're too late, you're too late; it's all over! He's gone in!"

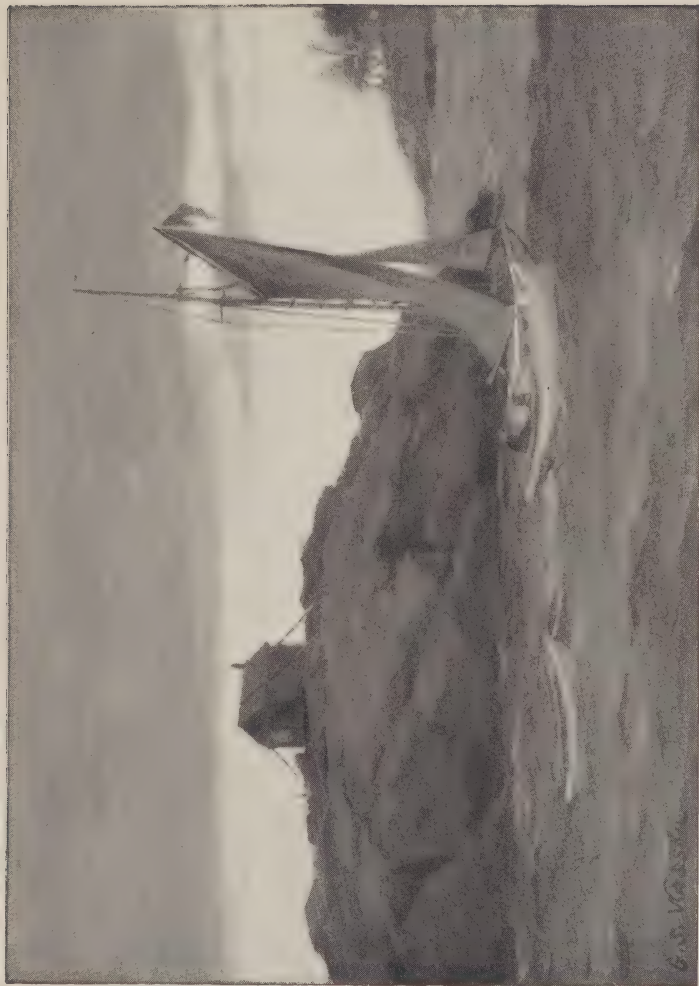
Atherton seemed noticeably excited by this incident. I had scarcely gone below, he said, when an old fellow, bent and lame, appeared outside the little house on the rock with a violin, and, his every movement showing clear-cut in dark relief against the white glare of the sea-glin, straightway played through the quaint old melody always so dear to us both.

Atherton explained that he should have called me sooner, but that though instantly spellbound by the glamour of an air at once recognized as intimately associated with the sweetest days of youth, yet strangely enough it was some moments before its name flashed

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upon him. I was at first disposed to joke him about the matter ; but he vehemently insisted that there could be no mistake as to the identity of the tune. The light wind was favorable, and the distance at that point less than a stone's throw, since, narrow as is the Gap at best, when nearly abreast the house a sunken ledge forces passing craft to keep the bold shore of "Night-Cap" close aboard. My friend reiterated that not only was every note perfectly distinguishable, but that owing to our proximity, and the astonishing manner in which all objects were then relieved against the dazzling glow in the east, a lameness and certain other characteristics of the performer were doubly accentuated.

It was agreed that under almost any other circumstances, we would certainly land and have a talk with the man who thus unwittingly called up such fond memories of our early years, Atherton even vowing that he would give fifty dollars down for the chance of hear-



THE WHITE GLARE OF THE SEA-GLIN

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ing the air once more, and learning, if possible, something of its history. Unfortunately, the beautifully written music given him by Izetta Gibbs so many years before had been destroyed in a fire, and despite many attempts to hear it since the memorable night when we took final leave of the sisters, the haunting strain had never gladdened our ears.

But the day was short, and though but little past three o'clock, there were already signs of approaching darkness. Since leaving Herring Gut, the uncertain wind had worked into the northeast, and even as we spoke, scattering flakes of snow fluttered slantingly by. There certainly was no time for visiting, if we had any hope of making harbor farther west, and we knew of no safe one in that direction nearer than Pemaquid Point. Attempting to beat back to Herring Gut against the strong flood tide seemed the alternative, and one very little to our liking.

At this juncture Cap'n Dan'l Murdock's

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anxious visage appeared from below. Quickly he raised a warning finger towards the still baleful gleaming astern.

“I s’pose likely you seen that there sea-glin to the east’ard, ain’t ye?” he inquired, with forced calmness.

“Git a sea-glin
Ketch a wet skin!

and ’most gin’ally a breeze o’ wind hove in! That’s what they always told *me*, from the time I was the bigness of a draw-bucket. Maybe you ain’t took notice she’s all shuttin’ in thick-a-snow to loo’ard, there.” Here the captain’s righteous indignation burst all restraint. “Might I jest inquire of ye where in hell you fellers cal’late to fetch up to-night, anyways?” he shrieked.

To tell the exact truth, neither of us was at the moment prepared to answer this question. Cap’n Dan’l saw his advantage, and was quick to press it home.

“I been tellin’ of ye right along that this

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'ere running clean past harbors so free is ter'ble foolish works," he said. "'T ain't never been called no great trick of mine, not since I was the bigness of a draw-bucket. You never seen no such tormented sea-glin as that there without there was somethin' to pay consid'ble quick afterwards. Now if you know when you're anyways well off, you 'll jest up hellum, and shove this little packet of yourn right in here to loo'ard of the islant, afore ever she shuts in so thick-a-snow you can't see ary hole through a ladder!"

"Yes," said I incredulously, "that would be a nice comfortable berth to ride out a gale of wind in. We might as well jump to it out on the back side of Monhegan!"

"I guess likely you 'll have to take and put up with what you can git for a harbor, after comin' this fur, and some lucky to git her, too!" retorted the captain. "I can take and run this bo't chock up into an eel-rut betwixt them islants yonder, where if she doos drag

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ashore we'll stand some show to git out of her alive, anyways. The last year ever I went in the old M'ria Foss it shut in thick-a-fog on me one time out here abreast of Metinic, and I kep' off and followed a fisherman clean up into this 'ere little guzzle-hole; that 's all the way how I happen to know the least mite about it. It's kind of narrow-contracted like, so's I never see no sight to git out with my vessel for goin' on four weeks' time, and it lays a grain open to the east'ard; but the bottom is nothin' only blue clay, and I guess likely we can make out to hold her to anchor someways."

But I still demurred. The chart certainly indicated no very inviting shelter among these exposed, forsaken-looking rocks, and as the wind now seemed settled with some force dead astern, I advocated taking the chances of running, rather than risk being caught indefinitely in a desolate spot where it was impossible to procure stores of any kind.

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Atherton, on the contrary, was extremely desirous of stopping at all events, and hunting up the musical dweller on Night-Cap. For the sake of an interview with him, he declared himself ready to endure all manner of privations, and even to extend his vacation a week, if necessary. Finding him really so greatly in earnest upon this matter, I of course gave in, though again referring to the question of supplies.

Cap'n Dan'l, however, eagerly overrode all objections on that score.

"Fur's ever that goes," he said, "you hain't need borry no trouble at all. You'll find there's an old reynuck keeps store in there back of them far-trees, or done so the time I got ketched in the M'ria Foss, anyways. I ain't noways liable to forgit *that*, neither, for he taxed me twelve cents a plug for tobacco jes' same's I can buy me any God's quantity of anywheres on the main for ten!"

As to the comparative safety of harbors, it

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seemed preposterous to argue with so eminent an authority as Captain Murdock. He took the helm at once, and in a short time the Gulnare was at anchor in a curious little slue between several rocky islets lying a small distance south of the Night-Cap. On the largest of these stood a low, weather-beaten building rudely labeled "Store." Behind this rose the usual forlorn growth of stunted spruces, bent and broken, and bleached by fierce salt winds from the sea almost to the grayness of the ledges to which their bare roots clung.

Two or three ancient lapstreak boats of the variety here known as "peapods," coal-tarred and patched to the last degree, were hauled up on the rough shore amidst a clutter of dilapidated lobster-traps. Close alongside our anchorage lay a worn-out dory full of water, attached to a huge lobster-car, from which the long brown kelp writhed and twisted in the strong tide with snaky sinuosity.

Aside from the solitary little dwelling just

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visible over the ledges on Night-Cap, no sign of possible customers was to be detected. At supper, however, Cap'n Dan'l relieved our minds as to what supported a store in this desolate locality by stating that, during the mackerel season, "draggers," "netters," and sometimes even large "seiners," anchored off here through the frequent dense fog-mulls on this part of the coast. Moreover, from computations based upon close observation during his four weeks' forced sojourn here in the schooner Maria Foss, the captain deemed it only natural that between lobstering and supplying fishermen with ten-cent plugs of tobacco at twelve cents each, the insatiate storekeeper should have become so "independent rich" by this time as to own several of the islands. But concerning the fiddling resident of Night-Cap, Captain Murdock could furnish no information whatever. The little house had suddenly appeared there some years before, and that was all he knew of it.

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Our anchorage lay open to the eastward much more than was desirable, and directly after our meal an additional large anchor was carried out ahead, and planted where it would do the most good in the expected northeaster. Having made things snug in this and various other ways, Atherton and I determined on rowing the short distance across to Night-Cap, hoping for at least a few words that evening with the unknown musician in whom we both felt such sudden and peculiar interest.

Landing on a short strip of rough beach between steeply sloping ledges close to the house, we quickly scrambled up and knocked at the door.

There was no response, nor did repeated brisk raps elicit any reply. In slight puffs of cutting wind dry wisps of the rock-weed "banking" about the house rustled faintly from time to time; the outer islands sent in a continuous rumble of the pounding sea, and among the ragged, kelp-grown ledges of

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Night-Cap itself the purling undertow surged rhythmically to and fro. We tried the door, but found it locked. The hut, for it was scarcely more, contained but one room, furnished with three small curtainless windows, though one of these was partially screened by a newspaper, which in spite of the growing darkness was at length identified as an old copy of the "Damariscotta Weekly Beetle and Wedge." Through dint of close peering at the other windows we finally were satisfied that the house contained no occupant, and certainly there were no outbuildings in which the owner might be concealed from view. Just outside the door stood a shallow earthen dish, from the ice in which protruded the hard-frozen tail of a fish evidently intended for dog or cat. A rusty axe was fast embedded in a chopping-block made from the section of a large vessel's mast, and scattered about underfoot near by lay a scant supply of firewood composed entirely of drift-stuff.

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At the top of the steep beach, with other useless litter, was to be seen the flattened remains of a large dory; but of serviceable boat there was no sign, and we soon concluded that the dweller in this most forlorn of all little homes had left his bare islet for some purpose since we passed through the Gut on the farther side, over an hour before. As Atherton ironically suggested, possibly he might have rowed across to the store for his evening paper, and incidentally to gather the latest gossip of this pleasant little hamlet by the sea.

We were on the point of leaving, when suddenly from seaward came the muffled, fast augmenting roar of violent wind. In a moment a blinding whirl of stinging snow smote us in the face, and the northeaster struck with such fury that for an instant we both staggered helplessly before it. Guyed to the rock by wire rigging from some wreck, the building tremblingly withstood the shock, yet numbers of shingles torn from its roof and sides rattled

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sharply down over the jagged ledges into the sea. Hastily we reëmbarked, and sped back to our craft, driven by a howling blast which had already brought Cap'n Dan'l on deck with the fog-horn, in great anxiety for our safety.

He reported that the storekeeper had been out alongside with assurances that his entire stock of confectionery, tobacco, oil, and matches lay at our disposal. Moreover, the man left a cheerful message of minute instructions as to the safest spot for beaching our craft in case she struck adrift during the gale no doubt heralded by the late pronounced sea-glin.

We especially inquired whether the visitor had referred to the present whereabouts of his solitary neighbor, but the captain replied definitely in the negative. He then related with much satisfaction how completely he had balked his caller's curiosity concerning the appearance of a yacht at this season, while

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allowing him to depart with some misgivings as to our purpose. Plainly, the matter of those twelve-cent plugs still rankled in the soul of Cap'n Dan'l Murdock.

Now when an individual, week in and week out, keeps up the standing, unwavering prediction of a storm, in the natural course of things sooner or later the time is bound to come when his croakings will be verified to some extent. The day of Cap'n Dan'l's triumphant vindication as a weather prophet had undoubtedly arrived. There ensued by all odds the most furious gale ever encountered in all our long boating experience. It struck, too, with such unparalleled suddenness, and in so blinding a squall of wind and snow, that, had we kept on, a bad hour of reefing must certainly have been met, and doubtless a desperately hard night of it afterward, if nothing worse. One luckless craft thus caught, and compelled to run hit or miss for the feeble light at Townsend, met with sad disaster

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through total inability to carry sail or to distinguish any landmarks whatever in so hopeless a combination of overpowering wind, darkness, and driving snow.

As it was, the old Gulnare escaped going ashore only through the excellence of the holding-ground, the unusual size of anchors and roads, and the unremitting attention given her throughout a memorable night of great anxiety and exposure. For nearly two days it was impossible to communicate with the island; but on the second afternoon Atherton and I ventured to attempt the comparatively short distance between us and the store.

The storekeeper, or Principal Inhabitant, as we had dubbed him, proved a ragged, hulking giant in "keg-boots," and lobsterman's "bar-vel," with a stolid red face covered by many days' grizzly stubble. On our landing, he abandoned the work of shoveling snow from the boats on shore, and after some few remarks upon the severity of the gale, led the way

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towards the house, while no less than nine of his progeny viewed our passing, open-mouthed.

Thickly plastered with sticky snow, the wretched nakedness of this one dwelling and its surroundings was somewhat less striking than upon the day of our arrival; yet it unavoidably occurred to us that however "independent rich" the Principal Inhabitant might have waxed in this God-forsaken spot, there was small part of his wealth invested either in the homestead itself, or in the unique "store" which occupied one small room. Into this apartment the proprietor at once conducted us, through the kitchen, where a dejected-looking woman with babe in arms turned a listless eye upon us from the hot cook-stove.

Entering the store, we seated ourselves upon a board between two boxes, opposite the board upon two barrels which constituted the counter, and after acquiring several of the famous twelve-cent plugs as an offering to Cap'n

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Dan'l, began questioning the man concerning his nearest neighbor.

But upon this subject, or indeed upon any other, he was for some time indisposed to talk, apparently harboring, as Cap'n Dan'l had surmised, a suspicion that we were wily fish-wardens on the hunt for "short" lobsters. Further conversation, however, and a few more judicious purchases, followed up by the liberal use of a certain lubricating fluid from a wicker-covered flask, at length served to limber the tongue of the Principal Inhabitant to a marked degree.

"Old Uncle Sylvane over acrosst here on Night-Cap," he finally began, "accordin' to folks's tell, was always jes' so odd and cur'us acting like. Seems 's though up in home there on the main where he come from, he'd went to work and got hisself so ter'ble down on them summer rusticator folks, that one time he up and swore he'd go some place where he 'd never once set eye on another one

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of the breed so long 's ever he drawed breath!"

"Why, what under the sun did the man have against the summer visitors?" Atherton asked in surprise. "I thought they were what you people down this way counted on, nowadays."

"Oh, wall, I guess likely some doos so, but old Sylvane he was always kind of cranky like, you see,—always and forever cal'lated to be on the off side, someways. One thing, he claimed them rusticators had went to work and h'isted up taxes till nobody else could n't live along of 'em in the same town,—and maybe he wa'n't so fur out of the way there, neither. Anyways, four year ago this last spring, he come in here one day with his old carry-way bo't,—one he picked up over to Townsend there, the time the pogy-factories busted up, you rec'lect,—he come in here and ast me did ever I run afoul of ary rusticator out here yit?

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“By Jim Hill, no!’ ’s I, ‘and ain’t noways liable to neither, I guess. What for God’s sakes do you cal’late is goin’ to fetch them kind chock out here?’

“Wall, he did n’t know as he could say about *that*; all is, he allowed there wa’n’t no livin’ man could say for sure jes’ where them rusticators would n’t strike to, yit. He says there wa’n’t ary place left on the main at this day o’ the world where some of ’em had n’t lit, and sp’ilt everything for poor folks, chock to the handle, and if I never had none of ’em out here *so* fur, this was jest the very place he’d love to take and settle right down for the rest part of his stoppin’ ’round. He wanted I should take and give him a quitclaim on Night-Cap right away off, but I wa’n’t noways anxious to sell her, so finally he come under writin’s to pay me three dollar a year for the use of her.

“Inside of a week’s time after that, we had a couple days’ fresh nor’wester, blowin’ like

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a man right direct off'n the main, you know, and along about four o'clock in the afternoon the secont day I see this 'ere bo't headin' in dead afore it, with every mite of wind she could stiver under, and still, she never appeared to git ahead no great sight, neither, that is, not same 's you 'd nachally think she'd ought to went. Pretty quick I twigged this 'ere great big cur'us lookin' thing a-follerin' in her wake, much as two hunnerd yard astern.

“‘By Jim Hill,’ thinks I, ‘what’s broke loose now?’ I took and run chock out on them high laidges to the nor’rard, where I could see good and plain, and come to find out, if ’t w’a’nt old Uncle Sylvane in his old carry-way bo’t, big as life, with his house in tow of him.”

“In a scow or on a raft, of course you mean,” I said.

“Not a mite of it,” the man replied. “She was one of them little old smoke-houses he’d got holt of in there to Gibbses Cove, and

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seems's though he'd went to work and dumped her ker-plunk overboard at high-water slack early that mornin',—took this 'ere fresh nor'wester right plumb in the stern, with the full strength of the ebb to boot, and come out here nice as a pin. We turned to and hauled her in onto the beach there to Night-Cap fur's ever she'd float at high-water that night, and she laid there made fast to them laidges for goin' on a month's time. Sylvane he stopped aboard his bo't right here, till one time there was a big seiner dropped in to lay out a fog-mull, and then Sylvane he jest takes and goes right out aboard and raises a crowd to come ashore along of him and twitch that house of hisn clean up atop of them rocks in no time, and plant her jest where she sets to-day."

"Well, well, that's one way to move, sure enough," said Atherton. "You say, though, that he came from Gibbs's Cove. Just where is that?"

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“Why, Gibbses Cove lays right in here on the main, anigh abreast of us. B’longs to the town of Dam’riscotty, by good rights; any-ways that’s where all them Covers goes to heave votes town-meetin’ day. She makes up in back of Pemaquid a consid’ble piece, the Cove doos. Sylvane he was one of them Cove Gibbses hissself, you know. By Jim Hill! but you come to get chock up in there that fur, and you’ll find ’most everything that goes on two legs is one of them Gibbses. Lord, there’s Gibbses Corner, and Gibbses Crick, and Gibbses Mounting, and I don’t dasst to say what ain’t Gibbs. They’re thicker’n spat-ters, and I guess likely always has been that way since the time Columbus landed to Plymouth.”

“Well, but about this old man Gibbs out here,” Atherton continued, with fast-increasing interest. “I’m anxious to learn all I can of him just now. He must have some little property, or people to help him. An old man

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such as he never could earn a living out here, could he ? ”

“ Wall no, I dunno as he could, winter-times ; not take it all crippled up so bad. You ain’t cal’latin’ to git holt of the building, be you though ? ” the man asked with sudden suspicion.

“ No, no ! nothing of the sort ! ” Atherton protested. “ I merely want to find out about the old chap. I ’m not sure but that I knew some of his people years ago, you see. ”

“ Oho, that ’s it ? ” said the storekeeper. “ Wall, there ’s folks enough of hisn scattered round in there to the Cove. I used to hear say that Sylvane had a little something put by, and I would n’t wonder if he had n’t. He never raised no family, and I ’m knowing to it for a fact that he went first mate of the old bark Two Sisters, along of his brother, Cap’n ’Life Gibbs, fourteen year to a stretch. After they was all cast away, the time Cap’n ’Life was drowned, Sylvane he come back home

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here for a spell, and bimeby bought him a little freighter that he run to Portland for years and years. I guess likely he must had a dollar or two in his stockin', fast enough. Anyways, he seldom ever lifted a hand out here, without it was to cut him up a stick of wood, but the heft of the time he'd 'most always jest set there and fiddle to hisself all soul alone, by the hour to a lick. Jim Hill! but he was a master old feller to take and make a fiddle talk right out, now I tell ye what. For that matter, though, every one of them Gibbsses always was chock-a-block full of music, but seems's if Sylvane in pertik'ler had the fiddle right down fine. He'd pick him up consid'ble loose change every once in a little while a-fiddlin' to them big 'times' they have in the Temp'rance Hall there to the Cove, and quite a few folks has even come clean out here coixin' of him to go in home and fiddle for 'em same's he used to.

“But you see he'd growed to feel kind of

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streaked like, this last year or two. I seen myself that last winter took it out of him scand'lous, and come to take it this fall, seems's though he'd aged up ter'ble quick, all to once like. I know along about the fust of the month somewheres he says to me one day he guessed likely he'd have to go back in there to the Cove again, and put up along of some folks. He says to me that time like this, 's he, 'I'm gittin' so's I ain't the fust speck of good,' 's he; 'I'm all crippled up and disenabled jes' same's a plaguy old main-sheet block with the sheave all broke down inside of her. I think 's some likely,' 's he, 'that prob'ly I *could* make out to live till springtime again, someways or 'nother, but there, you!' 's he, 'here 't is the fall o' the year, and comin' on cold weather pretty quick now, — I ain't got the currage, — I guess I full better go back in home there and git all through while she holds good and mod'rate like.'

“Seems's though the poor old soul wa'n't

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so very fur out in his cal'lations, neither. I had a few lobsters to run in there to the Cove not but a short spell afterwards, and so I give him and his cat passage in aboard of me, with the old carry-way bo't and the heft of his dunnage in tow. Now take it that day you folks come in here to anchor, I seen plain as could be we was in for an extry heavy breeze o' wind. I had me a gang of bran'-new traps sot off here a piece to the s'uth'ard, and thinks I, in room of leaving them traps be, to chaw to bits soon's ever the sea commences to run anyways deep, I best git a move onto me, and fetch 'em in. Them oak boughten traps stand me nigh a dollar apiece, ye see, with my time hove in. Wall, sir, coming back along, about noontime, Enos Gibbs run acrosst my bow, right handy-to, in his spreet-s'l jigger. Enos he'd come out of the Cove early in the morning to try the polluck off here, and was givin' it to her in home again, — 't was all hermed up thick for snow down to loo'ard then, you rec'lect.

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“‘Joe Tom!’ he hollers (that’s me), ‘did you hear tell yit about Uncle Sylvane?’
’s he.

“‘No,’ ’s I. ‘What’s up?’

“‘Wall,’ ’s he, ‘he’s got through there to father’s, and we give him his funeral a week ago this very day!’”

IV

KEEPING TALLY

IV

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SO many of Skipper Abijah Kidboard's neighbors were themselves capable of amazing feats of dosing with nostrums of all descriptions, that when he and his good wife became locally celebrated for absorbent qualities in this direction, it was quite safe to assume that their reputation rested upon a solid basis of fact.

In his woodshed boxes and barrels were filled with empty bottles; shelves and beams were crowded with dusty specimens, and behind the barn a "krawm-heap" sparkled in the sun with their fragments. A glance at the labels led to the supposition that the pair had long suffered from a large proportion of the ills which flesh is heir to, and in fact, ever since the skipper retired from the fishing business

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reputedly "independent rich," he seemed to have occupied the time chiefly in diagnosing his case, and lightly appropriating to himself new ailments and complications.

One wet morning in the fall of the year he sat by the kitchen window gazing somewhat disconsolately out over the rain-pitted water of the harbor, and at frequent intervals tentatively tapping his chest with the fingers of a puffy hand. Presently in came Asa Spurling, clad in dripping oilskins, and, unmindful of the puddle which at once began forming on the immaculate floor beneath his chair, soon inquired concerning the various forms of ill health enjoyed by the worthy couple at the time.

"Well, Asy," Skipper 'Bijah said in reply, "for a reg'lar-built invaleed same 's I be now, I dunno 's I 'm feeling any great sight wuss 'n common; same time I ain't hankering for no wrastling match this morning. The thing of it is, the woman and me are nothin' only old has-

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beens at this day o' the world, and it's anigh time they took and stowed the pair of us away up back of the meetin'-house. There's a couple more ribs fetched away from their sockets sence the last time you was in; — that makes four of the plague-gone things to strike adrift on me this fall so fur."

"Oh, I guess not quite so bad as all that comes to, Skip'," said Asa deprecatingly.

"Gospel-truth I'm telling of ye," firmly insisted the skipper, whose ideas of his internal make-up, it should be said, were noticeably at variance with the text-books. "There's four goners now, and no mistake. I felt 'em give up plain's could be. It makes it consid'ble unhandy jest now, too, for I ain't all through banking-up my place here for winter yit-a-while, but that's the way it always works every time; you can't never carry away so much as a rope-yarn without it happens jest when you're jammed someway or 'nother. I don't cal'late to set down and cry baby over it, though," he

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added. "I cal'late to keep right on doctoring and doing for the pair of us here as long's there's a shot left in the locker. We ain't got much, but we're all the ones that's left now, you know, and the way I look at it, we'd full better turn to and get the benefits of what little we *have* got salted down, in room of leaving it behind for somebody else to take and heave away foolish, like 's not. We ain't going to travel this road only once, Asy, and it always looks to me jes' though we'd full better take what's coming to us while we're so's to get the benefits. Afore ever we know it, we're liable to be all crippled up in such plague-gone poor shape we won't be able to take no peace of our lives anyways. — Ain't it 'most time for my Injin med'cine, Clarry?" he asked his wife suddenly. "Jest take a look, like a good clever soul, and see if she don't come next, won't ye? — My specs got all stove to flinders this morning, and I can't see wuth a cent without 'em," he explained to his visitor.

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Mrs. Kidboard laid aside the rag mat she was braiding, and adjusting her glasses, gazed thoughtfully at a noisy little clock on the mantel. Then she rose and consulted a battered slate hung upon a nail just beneath.

"I ain't anyways so sure but what it's your stomach-cure comes now, father, in room of no Injin med'cine," she finally said.

"Go 'long with ye, Clarry!" the skipper exclaimed. "I dreened my stomach-cure not an hour's time since, and piecened out with a drop or two of yourn. You take and overhaul the slate again; it's set down there plain's the nose on your face. — The way it is now," he further explained to Asa, "my mem'ry has got so ter'ble poor that without I kind of keep tally on the old slate there, some one of them med'cines is liable to git left. I'm taking eight sep'rate brands myself right along steady now, and I guess likely the woman she's got much as four or five of her own to keep the run of besides."

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“It’s only jest four I’m takin’ now,” Mrs. Kidboard interposed modestly.

“Ain’t you takin’ your large-size heart-cure yit?”

“Why no, ’course I ain’t, father!” she said. “Don’t you rec’lect when we was to the store only a short spell since they was all dreened bone-dry of large-size?”

“Well, well, jest the way you say, of course!” said Skipper ’Bijah. “I ain’t anyways scared to bate, though, it was my rheumatiz-pacific they was dreened dry of; but let it go, let it go, there’s no good disputin’ a woman’s say-so! Look at the slate again, anyways. It’s all down there in black and white. — Godfrey mighty, Asy! It doos beat tar-water the way I’ve fell astern since the time I commenced to stop ashore! Seems’s though I can’t coax up no ap’tite noways, and even the old pipe nigh gags me by spells now’days! The woman’s brother over here, he wants I should have me in a doctor, but

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I tell him what in tunkett do I want with ary doctor? I got no money to take and heave away on them kind, now I tell you what! If ever I'd hearkened to them college-doctors, I cal'late they'd had me under six foot of cold sod afore this time, and risk it! — You gone chock off to sleep over that slate, Clarry, or what is it ails ye? It's high time I was takin' something or 'nother, now I know!"

"Well, there, you!" Mrs. Kidboard said. "I been studyin' of this over and over in proper good shape, but it ain't anyways so easy to come at, after all. Seems's though you must have brushed your coat-sleeve acrosst her someways, though for that matter, if you'd set plumb down on her for a spell, I won't say as she could looked no worse. Dear me suz! but I do really wish 't you'd be sure to buy you some specs again, the very first peddler that shows up. Now here's where it says, — good land, though, what *doos* it say? 'B. B.' and

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then some figgers like. ‘Forty,’ I should call it, but there! —”

“Forty!” cried the skipper derisively, “Forty! Now ain’t that some likely! Ain’t that sense! That’s the greatest ever I heard yit! Guess you ain’t need say nothin’ much to *me* about buying no specs! ‘B. B. Ten’ is what it is, plain as print;’ Blue Bottle Kidney-cure — ten o’clock;’ give us it too, now, quick’s ever you can. You see, Asy, being as my sight ain’t exactly A No. 1, I seldom ever bother to read no labels on them bottles, and so I go pretty much by color, now’days, but blamed if I had n’t clean forgot I was takin’ Blue Bottle Kidney yit!”

“For the life of me I can’t make out from this how you ever tell what under the livin’ canopy you be takin’!” continued Mrs. Kid-board. “I declare you could n’t wrote this much blinder if you’d set out to! Now, here’s what looks to me more like ‘Red Sing,’ or ‘Red Bung,’ maybe —”

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“Lung, lung ! Red Lung, you poor ninny, you !” shouted Skipper 'Bijah. “That’s your lung-cure with the red wropper to her ; nothin’ to do with me this morning no more’n the child unborn ! It beats me how in blazes she comes to be set down on that slate this time, though. How long since you commenced on *her* again, for king’s sakes ?”

“Good land, you ! I ain’t never tetched of *her* for a dog’s age !” Mrs. Kidboard asserted. “My red wropper cure was all dreened six months since, and I took and hove the bottle out back of the barn with my own hands ! I declare if you ain’t got a mixed-up mess of it on this slate of yourn, and no mistake ! ’T is jest about the very lookin’est lot of gibberidge that ever I run acrosst ; now that’s the truth ! For the land’s sakes, Abijah Kidboard, will you jest take and tell me what in the name of reason ever you cal’lated ‘g-l-i-v-v-e-r’ was going to put you in mind of, anyways ?”

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“Plague take it all!” the skipper cried. “Talk about folks being numb! Any one would nach’ally cal’late they never once learnt you to read writin’s at all when you was to school! Them letters stand for ‘green liver’; jest only plain ‘green liver,’ and not another namable thing in this world; not a one!” he roared. “Set-fire! Ain’t I pretty nigh dranked my weight in that Green-Label Liver-cure; and now you ’ll set there and act jes’ though you never once heard tell of her! What’s the sense having a set o’ brains in your head at all without you cal’late to fetch ’em into play by spells?”

“Well, there, you, father,” his wife said soothingly, “seems ’s though I would n’t go to work and git all het up over it that way. My eyesight ain’t much good, I know, but nigh ’s ever I can tell it’s time you was takin’ your Liver-cure right off this minute.”

“By fire! I should hope so!” the skipper grumbled, as he opened a cupboard and drew

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forth a formidable-looking bottle. "What is it *she*'s marked?" he asked of his visitor.

"This 'ere?" said Asa Spurling, after close scrutiny. "Seems's though this one is a kind of gen'ral cure like —"

"Yallerish green wropper, ain't she?" 'Bijah interrupted.

"Well, yes; kind of greenish yaller like."

"'T ain't jest the one I was after," the skipper said; "but she's a grand, good all-'round style of med'cine, if I do say it! One of my own git-up, this 'ere is, and I always cal'late to take her whenever the rest-part of 'em don't seem to grip holt same's they'd ought to. Seems's though this one made out to kind of prod 'em all up like. I don't mind letting on to *you*, Asy," said the skipper, in a sudden burst of confidence, "though I would n't want this should go no further, but betwixt you and me and the windlass-bitts, there's a tormented great big ulster growing nigh the full bigness of my inner nerve, and there's times when

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nothin' else won't seem to reach chock in there without it's this same git-up of my own. Guess likely I better take me a dose now, as long 's the bottle is handy-by."

With this the skipper gave the bottle a vigorous shake and put it to his lips, when, suddenly recollecting himself, he politely proffered it to Asa Spurling. "Try a little grain this morning, will ye?" he asked. "No? Guess not? Well, maybe you'd full better leave right alone of her. I would n't want she should do ye no hurt; and she *is* stout, there's no two ways about that! I've knowed this one to make a man horn-up same 's a burnt boot afore now. You can't raise no such a med'cine to ary store, not if you tried a month of Sundays! By fire, though, there ain't no great heft left to this bottle. Looks 's if I'd have to be mixing me up a fresh batch pretty quick now!"

"Oh, good land!" broke in Mrs. Kidboard, with unfeigned concern, "I do jest hope and

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pray to goodness you won't never be possessed to take and mix up no more batches of that! Fur's I'm concerned, I'd a sight lievser skrimp on bread and butter, and have you buy all your med'cines to the store!"

"Sho, now! I want to know!" 'Bijah said, with wink and grimace at Asa. "What call is there for you to be so ter'ble set agin my pertic'ler git-up? Ain't she liable to take holt in proper good shape?"

"Take holt!" his wife repeated in a tone of intense disgust. "My land, Abijah Kid-board, you know well as can be that you went to work and eat a master great hole chock through my best enameled preserve kittle only the very last time you mixed up the stuff, and like to have stifled us clean out of house and home with the dretful fogo! I never want to see no more such works to this house for the rest-part of my nach'al life!"

"Well, well!" chuckled the skipper, evidently well pleased with this tribute to the

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effectiveness of his own pet "git-up," "no doubt but what this med'cine has got the bo-ink-um right in her. Folks that don't want her full strength can turn to and take her deluded down to suit! That's always a privilege of theirs, the way I look at it."

At this point, Mrs. Kidboard suddenly rose and began examining the slate again closely.

"Oh, land alive, father!" she soon exclaimed in agitation. "It's a mercy if you ain't massacred outright! Here's this slate got turned wrong side to, and you've been takin' med'cine according to last year's tally, like's not! Heavens to Betsy! We best git Asy to run and fetch over the doctor quick's ever he can!"

"Oh, fish-fush! Run and fetch nothin'!" said Skipper 'Bijah coolly. "You ain't need git rattled over no such little head-flaw as that, Clarry! We know there's about so and so many med'cines in this house, and all the reason in the world why I bother with keep-

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ing tally at all, is so's to git around to 'em all, share and share alike. Jest which partic'ler one shall go atop of which, ain't no great hunt of mine, as I can see. If we was ary one of us like to be killt for lack of doctoring-up with them med'cines right strict according to some plague-gone time-table, why I might full better turn to and hire that good-lookin' new school-marm down the road here to come in and keep us a reg'lar set of books, and be done with it!"

V

SKIPPER HAULTAUT'S WOOING

V

SKIPPER HAULTAUT'S WOOING

AFTER Skipper Jabez Haultaut gave up "going" himself, in company with sundry other well-to-do old fishing skippers of Killick Cove, he continually haunted the odorous wharf where the fares were landed. In the afternoon, as the boats' trips of fish were discharged and weighed off, each attendant skipper invariably produced a stumpy lead pencil, with which by dint of much moistening upon the tongue, and reckoning more or less audible, the daily earnings of his neighbors still in harness were figured up on the whitewashed sides of the salt-shed. This necessary task performed, Skipper Jabez returned to the cottage where he lived alone, being often accompanied by some lounging crony ready

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for a smoke in the old bachelor's disorderly kitchen.

One afternoon in the early fall, Amos Futtock plodded up the road from the wharf with his friend, and dropped in at the back door from mere force of habit. As usual, the talk was at first of fish and their market price, but having exhausted this subject for the time being, Skipper Amos sat smoking in silence, watching his companion clumsily busying himself with certain household duties. Suddenly Jabez Haultaut hurried to the stove, and, opening the oven door, deposited with a bang upon the table a smoking mass of some blackened substance evidently of no slight specific gravity.

"Jee-rusalem, you! ef I must say so, Jabez!" cried Amos Futtock, "what in tunkett d'ye call that stuff, anyways; that is, saying you 'd got to turn to and name it?"

"That?" said Jabez. "That's nothin' only bread, and I come within one of forgittin' of

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her this time, too. I always cal'late to cook me up enough to last me a fortnight to a lick. She's got the heft right in her, that bread has. None o' your squashy, cobweb loaves for me! That's what I call a reg'lar-built white-oak loaf o' bread, that will stick to your ribs something like!"

"I won't say as I see jest where the white comes in," Amos said; "same time I don't doubt a mite but what that bread will stand by ye in good shape. Make fust-rate ballist for a jigger, now I ain't scairt to bate. The way it looks to me, you once let a loaf o' that git set fairly, and you'll need a top-maul to stave her up!"

"Oh, well, now," Skipper Haultaut said, "you set there and laugh all you want. I've tried me a dozen different git-ups of bread, and this is all the one that will stand by me anything to speak of."

"By fire! No jokin' now, Jabez Haultaut!" exclaimed the other; "you do need to git

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yourself a wife the very wusst of any one ever I seen yit,— there's no two ways about that!"

"Well, you," said Jabez, "betwixt you and me and the windlass-bitts, I don't mind lettin' on that I've been kind of mullin' over that same thing myself of late, more'n a little. A woman doos come in consid'ble handy around the house, now that's a fact, but the thing is I ain't got the money to stand no such dreem. I'm most scairt I'd be on the town inside a year's time."

"I'll resk ye, Jabez!" said Skipper Futtock. "You got enough of it salted down' to jest lay right back and take your comfort all the rest-part of your nach'al life, if only you're a mind to think it; there's no good to back and fill about that part of it. What you want is a good clever woman that can take holt and cook and do for ye everyways; sew on your galluses buttons for ye, and all them things like, and keep your place lookin' kind of half ways decent. You're living a good deal

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the same's a cat un'neath a barn now'days, don't you know you be, Jabez?"

"Well, yes, I know I ain't in the way of sprucin' up 'round here any great sight," admitted the skipper, apologetically kicking a half-burned stick of wood behind the rusty stove. "I ain't been able to wash me up ary clean dish for going on three days' time now, because them tormented rats went to work and lugged off all the dish-swab ever I had to my name."

"Set-fire!" Amos Futtock exclaimed with a grin; "if 't was my house, I would n't darst take chances pizenin' of 'em so-fashion, for fear they'd turn to and die in the walls! But that only just shows how bad off you be, living all soul alone this way. D'ye cal'late rats would be anyways liable to trouble your dish-swabs if you had ary woman around to take and do for ye a grain, and keep things from gittin' so master slack like?"

"Maybe not, if only I could run afoul o' the

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right make," Jabez said. "The thing of it is, though, you ain't going to know jest what you're makin' fast to till it's too late to cast off all clear again, without a sight of pullin' and haulin'. Now you take and look at old man Grommet up the road; 'tain't only a short spell sence he was so ter'ble fierce to find hisself another woman; you know he went to work and put a piece in the paper for a one, but I hear tell now how he's all feather-white to git a disvose and be shet of her, *so* quick."

"Eggsactly," Skipper Amos said. "Quick's ever I seen that creatur' I knowed well by the eye of her she was liable to make the fur fly, and not half try, neither. You don't want to hitch up with them kind, of course, Jabez. You want to turn to and pick you out a woman with a real good mild eye in her head, ye know, — kind of mod'rate and easy-goin' like; something same's a seal has got for an eye, we'll say. You jest once git holt of a one with

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a proper mild eye, and it's seldom ever but what you'll hold a leadin' breeze and fair tide the heft of the time."

"Well, I dunno," Skipper Jabez said dubiously. "I'm consid'ble scairt of women-folks, myself. I always cal'lated the safest way was to sheer off, and give women-folks a rappin' good berth, same's we always done with them big floatin' ice-chunks we'd meet down to the Straits of Belle Isle, in the spring o' the year. You know jest how it worked with them chunks of drift-ice,—you might cal'late you seen the full bigness of 'em atop o' water, but by fire, there was liable to be a sight more of 'em spreadin' out un'neath than ever you'd think for!"

"Oh, good land, yes, I know you was always and forever scairt to death of women-folks, Jabez," Skipper Amos said; "but my advice is you'd full better be casting 'round a grain now to find ye a one. Bimeby, fust thing ever you know, you'll be gittin' so blame' old and

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crippled-up, the gals won't have a word to say to ye!"

"What sticks in my crop the wusst is always jest this here," Jabez went on. "S'posing ever I did conclude to git me a woman, how in the name o' reason will I go to work to find me a one, without I shove a piece in the paper same's Skip Grommet done, and take chances of gittin' me a gold watch, or else a wooden leg?"

"Blow my shirt! That's nothin' only a reg'lar fool-way to go to work!" Amos Futtock declared. "In room of troubling no newspaper, jest you hearken to me, and I'll soon put ye in the wake of something extry-fine; a reg'lar summer rusticator she is, and as slick a stout-built, rugged-lookin' woman as ever growed sence Adam was an oakum-boy!"

"One o' them rusticators would be too toney, would n't they?" suggested Jabez.

"Nothin' toney to hurt about this one," Skipper Futtock said confidently. "You been

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up to old Marm Biggses store anyways lately, have ye?"

"Bedide, no!" said Jabez. "I ain't had no call up that ways for a dog's age."

"Well, you," Skipper Amos continued, "fust place, then, you want to go to work and make you an errant right plumb up to Marm Biggses store, there. Old lady Biggs she's had a boarder there to her place this summer that makes out to be a master smart-appearing style o' woman; that is, if I'm any fittin' jedge, and same time her eye is mild as ever you'd ask to see. Land, if 't wa'n't for me being hitched already, Jabez, be jiggered if you would n't see me a-steppin' up to her myself, same's a chicken doos to a dough-dish!"

"I ruther guess you'll bear watchin' consid'ble sharp as it is, without I'm mistakened the wusst way!" said Skipper Haultaut knowingly.

"Oh, no, no! Nothin' of the sort at this day o' the world!" cried Skipper Amos, shaking

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his head in deprecation. "She's been down to our place quite a few times this summer to git my Tildy to do her up some little fancy washing or 'nother, and I would n't wonder myself if she wa'n't consid'ble well heeled. It's a blame' sure thing anyways that she ain't lifted a finger doing no manner of work to fetch in a red cent the whole summer long, now that's true as preachin'. Marm Biggs she told our folks she knowed Mis' Brown,—that's her name,—Brown,—she knowed well Mis' Brown was an extry smart cook, for she 'd give her p'int on cookin' lots of times this summer, and appeared to be posted right chock up to the handle."

"That might all be gospel-truth, too, but what is it makes you cal'late ary one of them toney summer rusticators would like well enough ever to locate clean down here, leave alone gittin' married?"

"Oh, well, you, come to that, maybe I ain't so fur out of the way as you think for," said

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Amos. "I been takin' soundings right along, and have kep' the run of this thing consid'ble close, if I do say it. I ain't going altogether by guess-work in this 'ere, now maybe you'll find out. To commence with, I got it right plump from Mis' Brown's own mouth that she's a lone widder-woman, and ain't really had no pertikler place ever she could call a home for going on four year. That's consid'ble straight, ain't it, you? Secont place, I'm knowing to it for a fact that she's jest fairly carried away with this 'ere Cove, and all us folks down this way, you might say, too. Set-fire! You jest ought to hear her take and run on soon's ever she once gits goin' full tilt in regards to Killick Cove! Why, she don't make no bones saying how she'd a sight lievser stop down here than to ary city-place ever she see! Yes, sir, she doos; she says she'd jest love dearly to turn to and stop over the winter down here!"

"Don't it everlastin'ly beat tar-water the

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queer notions them summer rusticators gits in their heads, though!" exclaimed Jabez Haultaut, pausing in his work, and gazing blankly at his friend.

"Queer notions!" repeated Skipper Amos; "of course they 're chock-a-block full of their cranky idee, else they wouldn't be rusticators. I cal'late myself 'tis their raising that makes the bulk of 'em act so plaguy foolish like, but same time you will by spells run afoul of good clever folks amongst 'em, for all their outlandish notions. They're every one bound to be jest so cranky-notioned some ways, though, and seems 's if this 'ere Mis' Brown takes it out running on in regards to the Cove. She allows it 'most makes her sick to think of leaving sich a ter'ble beautysome place, 'specially come to take it now in the fall o' the year, when things is looking their very slickest; that is, 'cordin' to her idee of the matter. You let her tell it, and all the rest-part of the rusticators that has to pack

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up their dunnage and be off to them city-places afore ever the leaves has turned, why them pore folks is jest fairly to be pitied! 'Only to think,' says she, 'of turnin' your back on them beautysome colored woods acrosst the Cove, and these 'ere beautysome brown salt-ma'shes with a beautysome old fog-bank hangin' over 'em of a frosty mornin', and the beautysome shinin' clam-flats, and the beautysome smellin' win'rows of kelp and rock-weed that's hove up every gale o' wind we git in the fall o' the year.' Why, Jeerusalum, you, ef I must say so, it doos beat all the way she carries sail soon's ever she once gits under way agoing about this 'ere Cove, Jabez! Rusticators is queer genii, anyways, but you got to take 'em the way you find 'em, and for one of them kind, I must say this 'ere Mis' Brown comes nighest to acting like other folks of ary one ever I seen yit."

"Cal'late she will stop over the winter, do ye much?" Jabez asked.

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"I'm knowing to it she's ast Marm Biggs if 't wa'n't noways possible to rig up a stove in that downstairs bedroom of hern," said Skipper Futtock. "Seems's though she's fell in love with the sceneries from up atop of that hill there; but for that matter, Jabez, you got a master sightly location right here where *you* be. There's plaguy few can lay over you, when it comes to talkin' sightly locations. No, sir-ee, you hain't need fret yourself the least dite for fear she would n't like, for I can tell you right out plunko, she *doos* like here, the wusst way, so there's that much to your credit at the fust commencement. What I want you should do now is to foot it right up to Marm Biggses yourself and look over the prop'ty quick's ever you can git round to it, afore somebody else cuts in to wind'ard of ye, like's not!"

"Oh, set-fire!" groaned Skipper Haultaut, "that's what gits me! Ain't there 'most always liable to be a troop o' women-folks hangin' round up there?"

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“By mighty, Jabez! Soon’s ever it comes to women-folks, seems’s though you was always kind of lackin’ like,” said Amos Futtock. “There’s liable to be folks tradin’ to Marm Biggses store, of course, but you hain’t need have truck with ary one on ’em. I’ll show you how to work it, easy as rolling off’n a log. Mornings Mis’ Brown goes out takin’ the air mostly, but along towards sundown she’s liable to set in the store or handy-by, and talk along of Marm Biggs. Now you jest take and git you a button, — some kind of odd-shaped button or ’nother, and you march yourself right straight up there to Marm Biggses, and give out you want to match that ’ere button the very wusst way. Marm Biggs she’ll trot out her boxes of buttons, for she’s got any quantity of sich krawm stowed away, same’s a plaguy old magpie; you turn to and commence pokin’ of ’em over to find a one to match yourn; same time you’re keepin’ your eye peeled to see what you can

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round about ye, — un'stand? Bimeby you conclude you can't stop no longer jest then, and will have to drop in again when you got more time to spare; must find a button to match if there's ary one to this Cove. Now, Jabez, there you have the whole thing right in your own hand, — all plain sailin' like. There's all the show in the world for you to git good and acquainted, for long's ever you keep holt of your button you got a bully good errant for going up there stiddy, and if you don't scrape an acquaintance with this 'ere Mis' Brown afore long, all is, you must be consid'ble numb. She'll talk along of ye, give her any show at all, for she declares she loves nothin' better than to set down and talk along of folks hereabouts. I'm knowing to that for a fact myself, and I ain't scairt to bate money that inside no time at all you can have the pair o' them women-folks alongside of ye a-scratchin' over them boxes of stray buttons for all they're wuth!"

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In the course of a few days Skipper Haultaut succeeded in screwing up his courage to the point of donning his Sunday clothes and climbing the rocky hill to Mrs. Biggs's little shop, which occupied the front room of her dwelling. The next day he repeated the visit, and that evening was again waited on by Amos Futtock, anxious to learn of his experience.

"Well, Jabez dear," said he, "how did you make it up on the hill? I heard say you was up there a couple o' times."

"Oh, yes, I been there, and no mistake!" the Skipper said briskly. "I cal'late 't was all over town, too, afore ever I was home the fust time. Let 'em take and chow it over amongst 'em for all o' me! They've always and forever got to have jest so much gossup-talk going round, anyways. Yes, sir, I took a cruise or two up that ways, so 's to git the lay o' the land a little mite."

"Button worked in complete, did n't it?"

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asked crafty Skipper Futtock. "Come now, you; I want you should out with the whole business. Let's we have all pertiklers!"

"No great sight to tell yit awhile, anyways," said Jabez. "I sighted your Mis' Brown yis'day, and passed the time o' day along of her, and to-day be jiggered if she didn't turn to and help cull them buttons over like a good one!"

"Want to know!" cried Amos Futtock delightedly. "You done it up in complete style, Jabey, blowed if you didn't! Don't you call her a ter'ble nice rugged-lookin' woman? Ain't hern a mild, mod'rate eye as ever you see?"

"Well, yes," Skipper Haultaut admitted, "it doos look to be a mild style of eye, now there's no use talkin'. That is, nigh's ever I could jedge, ye know. Seems's though I never got no such a very good chance to ketch her eye, someways or 'nother."

"No chance to ketch her eye!" Amos re-

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peated. "You air the biggest 'fraid-cat of women-folks that ever drawed breath! If the truth was known, prob'ly you never once darst up and take a good look at her, no-ways; now did ye, honest now?"

"Oh, git out, you!" Skipper Jabez said. "I never cal'lated to turn to and gawk her down, same 's you would, prob'ly, but I took in the gin'ral make of her, and don't you think I did n't. S'pose likely them are store-teeth ef hern, ain't they?"

"I don't think, but Jeerusalum, you! if I must say so, what makes the odds?" said Amos. "Folks now'days cal'late to shift teeth by time they 're twenty year old. Don't go gittin' cranky on a little matter of store-teeth at this day o' the world, Jabez."

"Oh, well, I don't cal'late to kick; fur from it," the skipper protested. "I call your Mis' Brown there, a master good-looker of a woman, and she 'pears to be real clever and sociable like, too, so 's I won't say but what

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I took to her complete. I cal'late to go up again in the morning, in room of hangin' off till afternoon; but same time, Amos, I'm awful scairt she's most too toney for to be any good to me. That's all the thing that frets me the most jest now."

"Oh, well, there! don't never go to work and borry trouble that way," said Skipper Futtock. "Seems 's though you'd got an enterin' wedge drove now in proper good shape; just you look out now and follow her up sharp!"

For two more days Skipper Haultaut was missing from his customary haunts on the fish-wharf, and when Amos Futtock again called it was in full expectation of hearing further encouraging reports as to the success of his scheme. On entering his friend's kitchen, however, he saw at a glance that something was wrong. Skipper Jabez had resumed soiled old clothes, and with noticeably downcast countenance sat rocking to and fro by the stove.

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"Good land, you! What's the hitch now, Jabez?" Amos began at once. "She ain't went to work and hove ye over *so* quick, has she?"

"No," Skipper Haultaut answered gloomily, "she ain't hove me over by word o' mouth exactly, but I'm done up to Marm Biggses, though, jest the same. I been actin' same's a plague-gone old nach'al; that's all ails me."

"Actin', Jabez? How you been actin', for king's sakes?" cried Amos.

"I mean I wa'n't nothin' only a plague-gone idjit ever to mistrust ary one of them toney rusticators would give me a secont look; leave alone a reg'lar-built millionaيرة same's this Mis' Brown o' yourn."

"Jeerusalum, you! If I must say so, Jabez Haultaut!" Amos exclaimed, "she ain't no millionaيرة by a long chalk! What possesses you to turn to and go talkin' so-fashion? Would n't she have nothin' to say to ye this time?"

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"I never once come within hail of her up there to-day, and don't cal'late ever I shall again in no way, shape, nor manner," the skipper declared. "I seen a plenty to turn my poke, though, and I up hellum consid'ble quick, and hove up the whole business."

"What in tunkett is it went wrong with ye, anyways? Quit this backin' and fillin', and talk sensible, will ye?" said Amos sternly.

"Oh, well, then," Jabez said, "a short story is blame' soon told. I set out for Marm Biggses to-day, but had only went as fur as the big ellow tree afore I sighted this 'ere Mis' Brown o' yourn —"

"There you go it again!" Skipper Amos broke in. "What the old boy makes you hang to it calling of her *mine* for? I dunno 's she makes out to be mine any more'n she doos yourn!"

"By fire, then! I can answer for it she's none o' mine, and ain't liable to be, neither!" Jabez retorted. "Call her jest only Mis' Brown, if

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you 'd any lievser. This 're Mis' Brown, she hove in sight ahead sailin' up the road with her par'sol set, feeling big as old Cuffey, and never taking notice of nothin' at all."

"Heading to the east'ard same 's you was, only clean away ahead, you say?" asked Amos.

"Yes, she come out of Marm Biggses, and kep' off to the east'ard."

"No great manners, I must say," Skipper Futtock said. "Seems 's though she might seen ye coming, out through the back side of her head, if only she 'd been a mind to! I don't blame ye for feeling a little grain sideways to her, swan if I do. Any one would nach'ally think she'd ought to wove her hand at ye, or else signalized ye someways, no matter if you *was* half a mile astern."

"Them summer rusticators ain't made that way," said Jabez, apparently wholly unmindful of his friend's sarcasm. "But being as I'd come that fur along, thinks I, guess maybe I'd full better stand along chock up to Marm

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Biggses, and perhaps I'll have a chance to find out whether or no Mis' What's-her-name cal'lates to stop over the winter. So I kep' agoing, but there wa'n't ary soul to home without 't was the little gal that tends store when the old lady steps out, ye know. I up and ast her was Marm Biggs anywheres 'round handy-by, and she wa'n't sure, but kind of misdoubted if I would n't run afoul of her to work out back o' the house. To git out there, prob'ly you rec'lect, you have to keep the nor-rard side of the building close aboard like, for the path runs betwixt it and the fence, and fetches you right chock up abreast the window of that downstairs bedroom where this 'ere Mis' Brown puts up. Jest the secont I come to go past, I happened to take a look up, and what d' ye cal'late I see there, settin' right out in plain sight on the window-laidge?"

"Godfrey mighty! Don't ask me what you see! I'd never tell ye in a month o' Sundays!" said Amos Futtock.

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"Well, sir," Skipper Haultaut said deliberately, "I wish 't I may sink if I did n't sight a *toothbresh* setting out there in the sun, full bigness!"

"Oh, come, come now, you never!" Amos exclaimed incredulously.

"I seen a toothbresh in that window if ever I see a one in my life!" repeated Jabez Haultaut slowly and distinctly. "To make dead sure I wa'n't noways mistakened, I turned to and ast the gal did ever she see Mis' Brown fetchin' the thing into play, and she 'lowed right off she had so, time and time again!"

"Well, well, well, Jabey," Amos Futtock said, sighing deeply as he at last realized the hopelessness of the situation. "That is consid'ble tough luck, and no two ways about it. It's a blame' sure thing you can't go keeping comp'ny along of nobody so ter'ble toney as all that comes to, no matter if her eye is mild as ary summer lake."

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"I should ruther say not!" Jabez Haultaut declared.

"No, no," Amos continued, "that would n't go down noways. I cal'late a man would be liable to suffer same 's a thole-pin, come to git ketched so-fashion! Well, Jabey, this doos make it kind of unpleasant like for ye jest at the time bein', but still 't ain't so bad but what it might be a sight wuss. This 'ere looks to me a good deal same 's if you was seeking harbor with your vessel, and had run into consid'ble shoal water; blowin' heavy, and dungeon thick-a-fog, ye know. You keep a sharp lookout forrard, with your lead agoin' stiddy, till all of a sudden you make breakers chock under your lee-bow, and have jest room enough to down hellum, tack ship, and stand off-shore again. You never struck your craft not even the fust little mite of a clip, so there you be all in good shape to try for a harbor somewheres else. You hain't need fret a particle for fear we won't work it nice as a pin yit, Jabey. This

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'ere toney Mis' Brown don't make out to be all the spare woman there is left 'round here at this day-o' the world!"

"No, that's gospel truth, you!" said Skipper Haultaut, with a brave attempt at cheerfulness. "I s'pose myself that's about all the way ever a man had ought to look at it."

VI

THE VOYAGE OF THE BRIG DECEMBER

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FACING due south towards the harbor, turning its broad moss-grown back squarely upon the humming trolley-cars and the much admired new hall of the Knights of Pythias, together with all other modern innovations at Killick Cove, the long neglected old Dunbar house still stands as a monument to the good taste and honesty of its builder, and a suggestive contrast to all its recent neighbors. Few in the place remember when the ancient house was last painted; and saving a silvery whitening of the delicate cornice beneath its sheltering eaves, and the pale greens of the mosses on its shaded northern side, the spacious old mansion everywhere shows the sombre gray of weather-beaten native pine.

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On three sides cheap modern dwellings have sprung up thickly on the once extensive grounds of the Captain Dunbar house, and squalid outbuildings in their littered backyards now crowd closely upon its white-shuttered windows.

Between these rudely encroaching sheds and hen-houses narrow strips of the old garden flank a broad walk of uneven flagstones, sloping gently away among great trees to a gateway by the shore. Among their few old-fashioned flowers, or in a sunny corner of the garden now devoted to beans and potatoes, with faces nearly hidden from view by huge calico sunbonnets, Miss Lucy and Miss Cynthia Dunbar, sole owners and occupants of the great house, may often be seen working with the moderation of elderly and now somewhat heavy spinsters.

Late in the fall of the year, often after the first "flirt" of snow has whitened the ground, on some opportune high course of tides old

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Skipper Job Gaskett brings in his dory to the very garden gate a heaping load of fragrant rock-weed and kelp torn from ledges outside by the first autumnal storms. With a pitchfork Skipper Job then deposits his cargo of dressing in a heap just within the fence, and each succeeding spring plows it into the little garden patch, which, as he remarks, the sisters carefully keep "wed out clean as a hound's tooth." This work Skipper Gaskett always does gratuitously, out of genuine regard for the "Dunbar girls," and in remembrance of their father, with whom he first went off-shore.

But beyond such neighborly kindness the Misses Dunbar are noticeably sensitive in accepting services which may in the remotest degree savor of charity. Upon occasions, it is true that they are obliged to call for protection against the ravages of summer boarders, who not merely select and calmly appropriate to themselves flowers from the old garden, but

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constantly importune admission to the house, and with an assurance of which, so far as known, "rusticators" alone are capable, actually attempt at times to dig with their jack-knives the curious old hand-made nails from such of the narrow clapboards as are within reach from the ground.

In spite of all neglect and indignities, however, like its owners the old mansion still preserves an unmistakable air of distinction. A spirit-level would detect no sagging of its lofty corner-posts, and the massive chimney at either end rises firm and true against the sky, while masons continually patch and re-top the spindling affairs on neighboring houses scarcely a dozen years standing.

Long ago, when Captain Daniel Dunbar built his great house at Killick Cove, the firm of D. Dunbar and Son was counted most prosperous, and the Captain himself had several years previous given up going to sea as a regular vocation, though still making occasional voy-



THE "CAP'N DUNBAR PLACE"

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ages to the Spanish Main in one of his numerous vessels, by way of keeping his hand in.

But after a long period of prosperity, abruptly the tide seemed to turn strongly against the firm of Dunbar and Son. Sudden deaths ensued in the family, one after another the vessels of the firm were lost, and relentless ill-luck attended each business venture, till much of the remaining property passed into strange hands. The younger daughters, Cynthia and Lucy, succeeded in retaining the homestead and its extensive grounds, together with certain distant shore property then deemed of the slightest value. As the village grew in their direction, repeated sales for building purposes of land immediately about the old house enabled the sisters to occupy it in tolerable comfort. Very recently, however, it was known that outsiders, presumably "rusticators," had made cautious inquiries concerning their once worthless real estate on the shore a mile or so out of town; and round about Killick Cove the

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opinion became general that better days were doubtless in store for the two "Dunbar girls."

The ill-fortune of the family had long since ceased to be commonly talked of at the Cove, but these recent rumors of a coming change for the better in their affairs awoke fresh interest in the once popular subject, and set many tongues wagging busily. Yet only a few of the older residents remembered the Dunbars in the days of their prosperity, much less the circumstances to which Captain Daniel Dunbar himself on his death-bed ascribed solely the evil days that followed. From having as a boy accompanied Captain Dunbar upon the last memorable voyage which led to his undoing, Skipper Job Gaskett's account of it is now listened to with especial attention. The old man is not given to telling the story, but when once induced to enter upon it, overlooks no essential particulars.

In my boyhood days [he will begin], you

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want to always recollect there was a big amount of shipping owned right here to this Cove. Nobody would n't think it at this day o' the world, when things has all run out and dreened away with us chock down to low-water mark, till I think's likely if ever a square-rigger should heave in sight off here, folks would come streaking of it down from clean back here amongst the junipers to have a look at her, same's if she was some brand new git-up of a flying machine. But once was the time round here when all the likely young bucks in town wa'n't obliged to pack up their kits and strike off somewheres else for a living, same's now'days. There was room and to spare for 'em all aboard our own vessels right to home here going fishing or a-coasting, ary one; or if they'd lievser go off-shore foreign, they could 'most always take their pick of cap'ns that was their own townneys, and go any place on God's whole footstool where salt water flowed.

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Cap'n Dan'l Dunbar he come by consid'ble of a West Injy business from his old sir, — that was old Cap'n Tristram Dunbar; but Cap'n Dan'l he took holt and struck out for himself like a good one, too, and the time he turned to and built him his big new house here to this Cove he owned a controllin' interest in jest an even dozen of them little old wall-sided, apple-bowed, West Injy molasses brigs; one of 'em named for every blessed month of the year, they was. Nary one of the lot wa'n't of any great bigness, nor they wa'n't so very beautysome to look at, maybe, and consid'ble dull, too, the heft of them little brigs was, so 's an eight-knot stick was about the best a man could get out of 'em; but they was master burdensome little creaturs, and 't was seldom ever but what their owners shared-up big in them days.

This 'ere December was the last one ever Cap'n Dan'l sot up here to home, and she was built right atop of his long sou'west

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w'arft that stood pretty nigh abreast of his house, there. Take it any real good low dreen of tides now'days, and the remains of the w'arft come out of water their whole bigness, clean to the aidge of the channel. It 's all filled in there at this day o' the world so 's even a plaguy little smoke-boat won't have a beatin'-channel up there till a-near half-tide ; but them days we 'd count on twelve foot draft chock at low-water slack, without it was an extry low dreen.

I was sixteen year old the winter they put up the December, and had been going then steady sence there was the bigness of a thole-pin to me. I 'd been cook two trips to the Cape Shore aboard of old Skip' Theron Marston in the pinky Waterloo, and I 'd been to the Bay quite a few salt trips along of his brother; and besides that I 'd had me a good try at going a-coasting aboard of old Uncle Billy Goodsoe in his plaguy old tops'l schooner Radiant, till she went to work and opened-up

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on us scand'lous one time to the east'ard of Monhegan, and like to drowned her whole crowd.

Thinks I to myself then, thinks I, Guess, by fire ! I'd full better take the hint, and quit going in them old sleds for good ; so come to have 'em set up the brig that fall right square a-front of mother's, I took great notion to go off-shore a spell aboard of Cap'n Dan'l. Now seems 's though Cap'n Dan'l's son Abner had turned to and coaxed the old sir someways into letting him cut a model for his new brig, and a master mess he made of it, too, as it turned out. This 'ere Abner Dunbar was always one of them kind of cur'us genii from a boy up. He never went much of any, being as he 'most always was porely ; I can't say myself as ever I seen him so much as set foot in a skift, but still he might. Maybe you would n't called him a reg'lar-built invaleed ; but seems 's though he was always kind of sickly and ailing like. Someways Abner was

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smart as a whip, though ; and everybody allowed he had a complete head on him for business, so he stopped to home in the office mostly, and done up all the writin's and headwork.

If only he 'd stuck to his desk, and left alone of things he knowed no more about than the child unborn, I think 's likely matters might worked altogether different, but Cap'n Dan'l always sot great store by Abner's say-so on 'most every namable thing there was going ; so nothing would do this time but that Abner Dunbar should turn to and whittle out his idee of a packet that would go like a scalt hog, and same time beat all creation for luggin'. Many 's the time I 've heard tell since how there was a plenty round here them days that shook their heads and allowed that model did n't have no more run to her than a plaguy hoss-trough, and wa'n't a mite of good anyways. Seems 's though folks laughed more 'n a little to see the way Abner

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Dunbar would set there on his high stool in the counting-room at the head of the w'arft, and lay it down to the old sir just how vessels had ought to be built! Some of 'em would take and cod Abner about his new git-up of a model, too, till they'd have him real het up over it. I know they said one time old Cap'n Richard Furber he dropped into the counting-room right after Abner Dunbar had hung up his model for folks to look at.

"Gracious ever, you!" says old Cap'n Dick, the minute he come to clap eye on the thing, "tell us where 's the other one gone to?"

"Other one?" Abner says right away. "What other one?"

"Why, you," says the old sir, jes' sober as could be, "the one you went to work and sawed that one off'n!"

Well, anyways, Cap'n Dan'l give me a good winter's job of it in the shipyard there, a-turning trunnels and choring round one way and

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another; and in the springtime I shipped aboard of him for a West Injy trip in his brand new brig. He'd been stopping ashore quite a few years then, you understand; but he allowed the fever was on him again bad as ever, and he'd got to sniff salt water afloat once more, if it took a leg. The old Cap'n always was counted a master hand to carry on till everything was blue; and especially take it when he was some younger, they all said he'd lug sail till the sticks went out of his vessel, but he'd have every inch of go there was in her. They said he never once knowed what fear was since he first went, and from all ever I seen of him myself, I guess likely it's the truth he never! He had an extry good learning, according to all tell, and soon's as ever it come down to navigation, he was always right to home. Maybe the old sir was a little grain stubborn in regards to carrying on; but stubborn or not, seems's though he'd always held the best of

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luck, and it's dead sure nobody out of this Cove commenced to make the quick passages he did, take 'em by and large.

Then again, Cap'n Dan'l was such a nice, clever soul to go along of; as square as a brick in all his dealin's hisself; awful loath to believe no hurt of anybody else, and the quickest to turn to and help ary poor devil in trouble that ever I seen yet. If they raised up more like what he was, round hereabouts at this day o' the world, I cal'late we would n't be where we be now.

But mother, she acted queer about it, that time. She never wanted I should have nothing at all to do with the brig, nor for that matter with Cap'n Dan'l neither. Mother she was always and forever jes' so kind of old-fashioned and sot in her ways like, same's the heft of them old seed-folks was, you know; and in particular she always sot a master store by signs and forerunners, and all such-like works. It wa'n't that mother

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held the least mite of a grutch against Cap'n Dan'l Dunbar, you understand, without it was that he took a sight too big chances of late by never paying no heed to forerunners in any shape, nor yet to the talk of two or three old ancient women-folks that lived here them days, and that I will say myself, prob'ly knowed their business a sight better than what Cap'n Dan'l ever give credit for. I've seen that plain enough since, if I could n't just to the time.

Cap'n Dan'l Dunbar, you see, was all the one of the cap'ns to this Cove them days that ever dasst quit going up and buying his luck off'n old Aunt Polly Belknap afore ever he'd fill away with his vessel on ary v'yage; that much I'm knowing to for a fact.

“They're nothing in God's world only a parcel of set-fired old fly-by-nights, anyways!” he says the time the December was fitting out; and he allowed right and left that in room of hearkening to no such old women's gossup-

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talk, anybody had full better give 'em the go-by complete, and have no truck along of 'em at all. There was three or four of us young squirts here then that, boy-like, cal'lated we knowed it all, and it seemed real kind of smart and cute to us the way Cap'n Dan'l turned to and snapped his fingers at them old women-folks and all their works. 'T was same's if he up and says to 'em that time, "Take holt and do your dingdest; I'm done with ye this time, clip and clean!"

There was two more from here besides me that signed articles aboard of Cap'n Dan'l to go off-shore along of him in the new brig, though mother she stuck it out to the last that the vessel was bound to be an onlucky creatur', spite o' fate. For one thing, she claimed there'd been nails drove aboard of her Sundays, to her own knowing; the keel too was stretched of a Friday; and then come to take it the very day of the launch, there was three big crows flew straight acrosst the vessel's bow not half

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an hour's time afore the dog-shore was knocked away! And come to have her turn to, and stick on the ways over a whole tide the way she done, and there was plenty of folks that wouldn't stowed their dunnage aboard for love nor money.

However, them that knows nothin' fears nothin', as the old feller says; and there was the three of us that shipped aboard of Cap'n Dan'l. The brig was loaded for Santy Cruz and a market; dry fish in the hold; green hemlock scantling on deck, and a ter'ble big jag of it, too. Then atop of all that, Abner Dunbar goes to work and puts aboard his ventur' of geese and turkeys and chickens; jes' though we wa'n't all cluttered up enough on deck already, in all conscience sakes. But Cap'n Dan'l allowed he didn't know as ever he should go again hisself after this v'yage, and the cal'lation was to make this one a payer. The December was the biggest one of the lot so fur, by rising of fifty ton; and this

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much I'll have to say for her, that she was as burdensome for her bigness as anything that swum the water. Then she was only jest fresh off'n the ways, you see, too, and had n't water-soaken the least dite, so's it appeared as if them ox-teams could n't cart truck enough down that w'arft to fetch that vessel's wales anywheres a-near the water's aide.

Finally, though, they got her piled up as high as ever they dasst to on deck; high enough anyways so's the man to the hellum could n't see forrard no more 'n you can stand chock in under the eaves of my woodshed here and sight clean over the ritch-pole! We took one of them howling four or five days' nor'westers same's we'll get in the spring o' the year, and give it to her out through South Channel for all she was worth. Everything aboard was all brand-new and strong, you know, and Cap'n Dan'l never showed her no mercy, now I tell you what! She was stiff as a church, and you could bear down on her

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hard as ever you wanted; she'd never seem to bung-up to it, nor complain the first mite; but there, you! she steered same's a plaguy hen-coop! Good land! it was hard up and hard down the hellum the heft of the time, and take it even then, to try and follow in that brig's wake a-running off'n the wind, would broke the back of ary eel, double quick step!

Cap'n Dan'l he never said any great, though no doubt he done some consid'ble tall thinking, for inside of the first few hours' time the rest-part of us aboard see plain enough what works there was liable to be if ever we was drove to scudding very long in such a contrary, wild-steering old box as she was. But it looked as though Cap'n Dan'l come to realize pretty well what kind of a thing he'd got underneath of him, after all, for the old sir was as smart a sailor-man as ever trod a rat-line, and knowed how to take care of his vessel with the best of 'em, even if he never had no great of an eye for a model. Quick's ever

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we 'd made out clear of Nantucket Shoals in good shape, he hauled to in under the land a grain, so 's to smoothen our water, and help out the steering; and then we run the beach down along fur as the Capes of Virginny, still holding our fresh breeze with a good rap full, and logging off nigh a seven-knot clip day and night.

Come to fetch down a piece past Hatteras, though, and the wind commenced to let go, and finally backened in around to about sou'-sou'west, right plumb dead ahead, or next thing to it, you see. Well sir, if that blamed brig was scand'lous dull even with a good smart leading breeze o' wind to force her, I only wish 't you might seen the actions of her soon 's ever it come to trying of her on a bow-line, a-buckin' into a head-beat sea! You could n't coax her to lay up inside of seven p'int's or so of the compass, noways you could rig it, and take at that, after the sea growed the least dite hubbly, she would n't make much

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better than a nach'al drift of it; seems 's though she'd got to have her three butts at every identical sea, and then go 'round it! Come to try to go in stays with her, and she would n't make no fist of it not once in a dozen times' trying; much as ever she'd look at it nigh enough to spill the wind from ary sail, so's it was nothin' only wear ship and wear ship the whole time.

Some days it would breezen on consid'ble fresh, and then 't would leave go and hold moderate and thick-a-fog or rain for days to a lick. Then there'd be spells when we'd get a noonday scale, maybe; when the sun would burn out through hot enough to horn ye up same's a burnt boot, and set every namable thing steaming the wusst way. Then there'd be great long drags of stark calm, but with this 'ere old fog-sea heaving in all the while, till the tormented slatting and chafing of the gear like to drove the whole of us crazy. Bimeby, seeing as we could n't so much as

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hold steerage-way the bulk of the time, in room of letting all them brand, spanging new sails slat a year's wear out of 'em that way, Cap'n allowed he'd full better take and furl the most of 'em till there come breeze enough from somewheres to stop the old creatur' from wallowing so like the mischief; so that 's what we done; but in room of clearing, the weather grewed muggier than ever it was, and by fire! the first thing ever we knowed, that brand-new suit of sails was all stuck with mildew fit to turn a man's poke to look at the sight! I never was shipmates along of a suit of sails that got tetched same's they was in that plaguy long-winded fog-mull. Of course them that stayed furled the longest got caught the wusst, but quite a few hundreds was jerked right out of the owners' pockets in the scrape, and nach'ally Cap'n felt kind of put out about it, for he'd went to work and made a big loss at the first commencement.

Well, the amount of the story was, we pitch-

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poled and humbugged about in them latitudes till the Cap'n and all the rest-part aboard was sick and tired of the whole business in good shape. For a matter of weeks and weeks the weather done every namable thing it could to aggravate and hender us from working to the s'uth'ard; but give us the least mite of a favor'ble slant, seems 's if it would n't nohow. As a general rule Cap'n Dan'l was rather moderate-spoken like in his way of talking; but take it along towards the last of this 'ere master long spell of doldrums, and the old sir commenced to chafe and say-over consid'ble little, till finally, prob'ly a dozen times a day he'd up and swear that only once let him get the wind astern again, or quartering, or a-beam, or any-ways else under the livin' canopy so's he could get way on the plague-gone old ark, and he'd come under oath to make her bones ache the wusst way afore ever he'd take one solitary inch of muslin off'n her!

“Set-fire!” he'd say, and stomp the deck.

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“Let me jest only get her nose p’inted again the way we want to go, and no matter if it should blow all hell out by the roots, I’ll keep her travelin’! If she won’t wear her canvas,” he’d say, “then all is she can strip it off’n her soon’s ever she gets good and ready, for there won’t be so much as a reef-p’int tetched of aboard!” Kind of desp’rate like he was, you see, and not to blame neither for feeling that way.

Well, sir, bimeby we did make out to get our slant, sure enough. First there come a little air o’ wind from the northeast one evening a short spell after sundown; and you can bate money there wa’n’t much time lost aboard of us in squaring away before it. Seems’s though Cap’n Dan’l could n’t take a secont’s peace of his life till every namable stitch of canvas was drawrin’ its best, and the vessel had commenced to make up a grain for lost time. ’T wa’n’t so very long neither afore she was carrying consid’ble of a bone in her

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teeth, for quick's ever the wind really once took holt to the east'ard, it breezened up quite fast, and kept pricking on all night steady, and all next day long, till come sundown again it took three men at the hellum to gurge her along, and the sweat dreened off'n the chins of them three a-near one perfect stream! To come right down to the truth of the matter, there wa'n't ary three men aboard that could lay back on that old jade's hellum hard enough or quick enough to make her steer half decent.

The weather, though, held fine as a fiddle, till late the next afternoon we see a devil of a lee-set commencing to make up dead ahead, and quick's ever the sun sot, the whole sky commenced to herm over thick and nasty-looking like, all to once. It blowed like a man, too, by that time; but still the old sir kept right on pokin' of it to her the wusst way, and would n't hearken a minute to the mate, nor nobody else, about snugging things

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down a grain afore ever it was pitch dark. It was no good talking shorten sail to him, not a mite.

“Set-fire!” he’d always say them times. “Everything is all new and strong as money can buy, and if the vessel won’t claw to wind’ard no faster’n a toad in a bucket of tar, why she’s got to be drove good and hard while we have a favor’ble slant o’ wind! That’s all the way I know to get anywheres in her!” ’s he.

Well now, there’s no manner of doubt but what he drove her hard that night, not a mite! I never want to be aboard of nothin’ that’s drove no harder,—now that’s the honest truth I don’t! There was a little piece of a moon that helped out some the first part of the night; but after she sot, it shut down thick-a-rain, and dark as ary dungeon. A ter’ble weecked old sea had made up then, you understand; as rough as a grater it was, and the vessel yawed so scand’lous bad that

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trying to run a compass course did n't amount to but precious little. About all ever a man could do was to watch her sharp, and try to ketch her with the hellum on every sea; but quick's ever it growed so pitch-dark, steering the plaguy box was a sight wuss'n ever, and more'n once she come a-near broaching to on us. That was the very thing the most of us had been scairt of her doing for hours; and finally the old man did conclude he'd best take some of the after sail off'n her, in hopes to help out on the steering a grain, though he seemed to begrutch every inch we took in.

For a short spell after that she done some better; but by midnight the sea had growed so much peekeder that she was acting bad as ever again; and I guess likely Cap'n Dan'l seen plain enough by that time that he'd ought to hove her to while he had daylight for it. 'T was blowing then right out end-ways, a livin' gale o' wind and nothing else,

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and the old sir allowed then that quick's ever it come anyways light again, we'd try heaving of her to.

But come daylight, and things looked to be wuss'n ever. The sea was something jest fairly scand'lous, and to take sail off'n her and heave to after things had come to such a pass, was no fool of a job, now I can tell you what! We could see the fore to'gallant-mast in particular buckling same's an Injin's bow, and to send men aloft on it was jest only a clear temptation of Providence. Besides that, though, the vessel threatened to broach to on us at every hand's turn, spite of everything; and when she made out to do that trick, every soul knowed well it meant good-by to any God's quantity of gear aloft, if nothing wuss.

Cap'n Dan'l he allowed right off he did n't have the heart to order hands aloft in such a chance as that, especially seeing that only for him the sails would been taken off'n the vessel hours before. The old sir had drove her

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too long, and all the thing we could do now was to try our dingdest to keep her going, and stand from under till something carried away, without she got pooped by a sea first, and that seemed like enough to happen any minute. We never had very long to wait, though, to see what way the cat was going to jump. All of a sudden the headstrong old jade fetched a rank sheer right atop of a master great comber of a sea, and come to on us, with four of our best men aboard jamming the hellum nigh square acrosst her stern, trying to keep her off!

Well, sir, I guess likely then you'd thought there was hell to pay, and no pitch hot, as the old feller says, sure enough! Crackerty-crack! Snappety-snap! Bang, whango! Down on deck came the very wusst old snarl of spars and sails and rigging ever you seen since Adam was an oakum-boy, and almost the very same secont there was a big overgowed green sea come cockling aboard of

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us nigh ten-foot deep atop of the deck-load on the larboard side, forrard, and by the time that sea got good and through with its work, the brig never bothered with no deck-load nor nothin' else to speak of forrard of the main-chains, for every blame' coop in Abner Dunbar's choice ventur' of geese and turkeys was sailing clean away to loo'ard, hell-bent for the Spanish Main on its own hook!

'T was nothing in the world only a meracle that some of us wa'n't swep' off'n her at the same time; but as luck would have it, some-ways or another every soul made out to keep a hand-holt, though a number of 'em had dretful narrow squeaks of it that time.

But after all, though, broaching-to that way was some consid'ble benefits to us in one sense, even if it did knock the profits of the trip all galley-west. By losing the heft of that deck-load, the brig come out of water a good two foot forrard, and after that 'ere,

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seems 's though steering of her was another story. We made out to keep her off again afore any great sight more damage was done, and run quite comfortable to what she had for the last twelve hours' time. The breeze o' wind commenced to mortify down a grain pretty quick afterwards, anyways, and in a few days' time more the sea smoothened down too, so's we got a chance to turn to and repair-up what little we could with the extry spars aboard. The vessel held tight as a cup, and never made no water at all, for wood and iron could n't be put together no stouter than what she was. We run clear of a plaguy pumping job anyways, and that was a mercy; but the thing of it was, that without we had half a gale o' wind plumb in the stern, the vessel was so tormented dull that it took a month of Sundays to get any place with her, and still, come to take the wind fair, 't would puzzle the old boy hisself to steer her.

But there, to cut a blame' long story short,

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we did finally make out to shove her nose into Santy Cruz, and nobody wa'n't the leastways sorry to let go anchor under foot. The place was always chock-a-block with shipping them days, and Cap'n Dan'l he was busy as the devil in a gale o' wind squinting right and left through his old spy-glass, a-picking out this vessel and that one from in amongst the fleet, for seems's though he was ter'ble well acquainted along of 'most everybody that went. Pretty quick he gets eye on the old brig Lafayette, that belonged them days right acrosst here to Kunkett Harbor. The master of her was one of them Kunkett Corner McIntires; old Alexander McIntire he was, and no better 'n what he ought to been neither, according to all tell.

The most of us aboard had heard tell many a time of old Cap'n Sandy McIntire, and his smuggling scrapes up round home there, and how the cutter's folks was laying their plans to nab him one of these fine days. We all took



THE BREEZE COMMENCED TO MORTIFY DOWN

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notice that the pumps was going consid'ble lively aboard of him this time, but never give it a secont thought for the reason the vessel was twice old enough to vote, and had the name of leaking like a basket. Pretty quick we see a boat put away from her with quite few in her, and Cap'n Sandy come over aboard of us, along with two or three others of them Kunketters in his crew.

Cap'n Sandy he allowed right off he was in a peck of trouble, and no mistake. Lord Harry, you! His face was drawed out nigh the length of the old green ambril he'd always have by him them days, fair or foul. Seems 's though his vessel was all loaded, and he'd made a start for home only the day afore, but mis-stayed in turning to wind'ard going out, and went ashore a short ways outside the p'int. There was no end of help handy-by, though; and so they made out to kaidge her clear again afore night; but she leaked scand'lous bad, he says, and he cal'lated the whole fore-foot was

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gone from off'n her. Some of us youngsters aboard the December nigh laughed in the old reynuck's face to hear him turn to and take on, and whine same 's a dog over his big leak, when we knowed it for a fact it was seldom ever he dasst leave go of his pump-brakes for over a watch or two at the furthest!

But seems 's though this 'ere master leak of hisn wa'n't the whole of his troubles, neither. Only that last night one of his crew, some kind of a Cape Verde nigger or other outlandishman, he says, went to work and died aboard of him.

Cap'n McIntire said the man had been feeling consid'ble streaked like for quite a spell, so 's they give him salts four or five days running, never once mistrusting but what he'd doctor-up fine as silk again, till all of a sudden he took this 'ere kind of a bilious attact, and slipped his wind afore ever they knowed it. They cal'lated to give him his funeral that afternoon, and Cap'n Sandy wanted the old

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sir should loan him a set of colors to heave over the body in room of a pall, bein' as his own colors was old and covered with patches the whole bigness. Cap'n Dan'l passed him over an extry set he had aboard, and bimeby off he went.

Well, the old sir turned to and got shut of his dry fish and what little pod of lumber there was left, quick's ever he could, and then was all carried away with casting about on shore to scare up a return cargo that was liable to pay the best money, and help offset the big loss he'd made on the trip out. Jest about then all hands of us took notice that old rat of a McIntire was following Cap'n Dan'l up dretful sharp these days. Time and again them two would stop below for hours with their heads together, and pretty quick young Joey Furber, the cabin-boy (him that keeps store up street a piece now'days), he let on to us fellows forrard in regards to a long confab he could n't help overhearing below there one

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time when them two cal'lated they was all soul alone. Seems 's though Joey was chock in aft there to work somewheres unbeknownst to 'em, and after they 'd once commenced their talk he dassent speak out noways, but figured he 'd full better lay low till they went on deck again.

According to the tell of the boy, Cap'n McIntire was trying his prettiest to coax the old sir into smugglin' home a big lot of rum; that was the gist of the whole matter. There was any God's quantity of such works carried on them days, you know, and old Sandy McIntire always had the name of dipping into 'em pretty steep, so I guess likely you could n't learn him no great in regards to the business. This time he went on to tell about the ungodly profits So-and-so had made by this 'ere running in liquors, and how such and such a cap'n had paid for his vessel clip and clean in no time at all, and so forth and so on,—a dretful earful of it he give Cap'n Dan'l that time.

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But seems's though at first the old sir kicked same's a steer, and growed real het-up over it, too. Joey allowed he fetched the table a lingin' old thump with his fist, and vowed he never once had gone into no such works so fur, and cal'lated he was 'most too old to commence now. Of course he must have knowed well that the heft of 'em in the West Injy trade them days always forelaid to smuggle home more or less goods, and wa'n't thought none the less of for it neither, by no manner of means; but all that never counted for nothin' with Cap'n Dan'l. He'd always acted kind of odd like, and set in regards to them kind of things, and give 'em a wide berth.

Well, seems's though old McIntire up and took a fresh holt, and commenced to tell what a grand good chance Cap'n Dan'l had at his place to home there for landing goods by night-times; 't was seldom ever you'd run acrosst such another fitting chance on the

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whole coast, says he. 'T wa'n't as though the stuff had got to be all boated ashore from the vessel laying clean off to anchor in the stream, same 's they done in lots of places, and then like 's not have to hip every kag of it up the beach amongst the kelps by main strength and stupidity, over big high laidges o' rock chock into the junipers maybe, afore ever they 'd have it hid away in good shape! Cap'n Dan'l's shore, he went on, was consid'ble bold-to, with good water clean to his w'arft at all times of tide; nary neighbor handy-by, and a warehouse all waiting for ye right at the head o' the dock; take and haul the vessel in alongside, put on the help, and jerk the whole business out of her in a single night, easy as rolling off'n a log! No trouble at all, he says, for ary man same 's Cap'n Dunbar to fix it all right along of the revenue chaps, and there he was with his money doubled or thribbled! Oh, McIntire he was a tonguy old reynuck them days, and he talked

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it to Cap'n Dan'l for all he was worth; but seems 's though the old sir never appeared to weaken none, not that time.

Finally, though, in a few days' time afterwards we heard say that a survey had been called on the American brig Layfayette, and the upshot of the matter was they condemned her then and there. Right atop of that old McIntire showed up aboard of us again, whinin' and taking on ter'ble bad, and all feather-white for another confab below along of Cap'n Dan'l. In a half hour's time the two of 'em come on deck again, and be jiggered if the old sir didn't up and tell the mate that by way of helping neighbor McIntire out of a hard plight, he'd agreed to ship his cargo of molasses and lug it home for him!

So all is, we took and dropped down alongside the Layfayette the first chance; but come to get to work discharging of her, seems 's though in room of all molasses, there was enough puncheons of Santy Cruz rum in her

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hold to float ary ten ton mack'rel jigger! Two or three of her crew took passage home aboard of us, and the rest-part shipped aboard of other vessels; but old Cap'n Sandy he stopped down there a spell to look after his affairs one way or another, and no doubt at all but what he worked his little scheme for the last dollar there was in it; that was right plumb in his line, and the Layfayette wa'n't the first old basket he'd got insured on chock to the handle and sold the very same way.

The rest-part of the yarn is soon told now, and same time it's the queerest part, by all odds. Nothing much out of the common run happened going home, but the brig was so dull it was a good deal same's making sail on a big raft o' logs, and we had a horrid long drag of it to the north'ard again. Cap'n Dan'l never had the first mite of trouble about landing his ventur' there to home, and for that matter, few of 'em had, them days, if they went to work right, and wa'n't known to be

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into such works up to their necks the heft of the time. But it always appeared jes' though old Cap'n acted kind of shamefaced like about the whole business; and I know there was folks that chuckled more 'n a little to see how the old sir hisself had finally come round to trying his hand at smugglin'.

But the way it worked, he never see no benefits of it, now let me tell ye. The brig wa'n't but barely discharged afore she took fire someways or other, and burnt chock to the water's aidge, together with the warehouse and the biggest part of the w'arft. Amongst a mess of other stuff they hove out of her cabin that night, was the colors that old McIntire borried off'n us the time of the funeral aboard of him. They was all tied up in a roll, same's when Cap'n McIntire fetched 'em back. Cap'n Dan'l he took 'em off up home with him next day, cal'lating to put 'em aboard of another vessel right away; but seems's though his daughter Myry undone

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the bundle, and come to find the colors tore quite bad, she set right down and repaired 'em up in good shape again. Myry was the oldest gal of the lot, you know, and always a little grain sickly like; that is, maybe not so very sickly, but a good deal same 's her brother Abner; noways rugged. Well, sir, Myry Dunbar she turned to and repaired-up them colors neat as a pin, and before noontime next day she took sick with *yellow fever*, and in two days' time she was dead. The day she died, Abner Dunbar he come down with the fever solid, and next day but one after *he* was dead. There was quite a few others of 'em ketched it, but them two was all the ones round here to die of it that time.

Poor old Cap'n Dan'l was nothing only a complete wrack after it was all over, and no mistake. Seems 's though he never could do no manner of business afterwards, and everything appeared to go to the dogs with him all to once. It wa'n't but about a year's time

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afore he had to give up, and take to his bed, and after it come to that, he got through consid'able quick. I used to run in to see him about once in every so often that winter he was by the heels to bed, and if he told me it once, he told me it a dozen times, that every mite of his troubles come on him by way of judgment for his weeckedness the last time ever he went. Take warning, boy, take good warning, he kep' saying.

There was numbers of 'em here that done their best then, trying to talk it into him that what he done that trip wa'n't noways so weecked as what he claimed; but the old sir never once give in but that he knowed full better than anybody else just why the Lord A'mighty turned to and laid hand on him so master heavy like.

But same time, though, some of the cleverest and best learnt folks ever we had, round here them days, always allowed there never was no call for Cap'n Dan'l Dunbar to up

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and buck dead against Aunt Polly Belknap and the rest-part of her click the way he done that time.

Fur's ever I'm concerned myself [Skipper Job Gaskett says in conclusion], I won't pretend to give reason for no such cur'ous works. I don't know but what Cap'n Dan'l had the rights of it, and still I don't know *as* he done so. What I do know plaguy well is that them two youngest daughters of hisn has always had consid'ble of a hard row to hoe all their lives long; and now take it at this day o' the world, if rusticators has come to the rescue same's we hear tell, and cal'late to swap good money for a track of rocks and junipers forty mile from nowheres, why then, all is, glory be! So much the better for them Dunbar gals!

VII

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THESE here plaguy bell-b'ys and groaners is a ter'ble old nuisance, you!" exclaimed Cap'n Roundturn, as he appropriated his usual chair in Simeon's store at the Cove one windy October evening. "I never made out to ketch me scursely a wink o' sleep all last night on account of that set-fired groaner gov'mint has went to work and planted out there on them s'utheast laidges this summer, and I don't see no great sight for ary wink to-night, neither. By spells I git thinkin' now I'll jest turn to some day and write off a piece to Washington, there, in regards to the whole business."

"Don't blame ye one mite, Cap'n," said Job Gaskett decidedly. "You 're jest the very man can do that same thing right up in good

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shape, and there ain't no manner of doubt but what them tormented pol'ticianers out there needs overhaulin' bad enough, and resk it. The way I look at it, all the reason in God's world ever them groaners and all them kind of things was got up for anyways is jest merely to help out them yacht fellers, and now the people has got to take and foot the bills."

"That's jest the case to a dot," returned Cap'n Roundturn, his furrowed face fast taking on a stern expression. "I been knowin' to jest about how this thing was working for some consid'ble time sence now, and soon 's ever I can git around to it, I cal'late to up and give some o' them pol'ticianers a good hot one right betwixt wind and water, as the old feller says."

"I dunno how 't is, but one way or another, some of them big herbs out there to Washington seem to run away along of the idee that us folks all down through this deestricht

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hereaways is ter'ble mod'rit and easy-goin' like; but mebbe some fine day they'll be liable to find out we don't cal'late to stand not quite everything, no more 'n a blame' stone-drag doos. There's folks here yit that's got a grain of buckram left into 'em, ef they do live a piece in from the ro'd."

"That's the talk, Cap'n!" cried Job again. "Take and poke it right to 'em good and hard! I'll resk but what you'll make out to say over to them fellers in proper good shape soon's ever you once git het up to it a little grain. The way I look at it, there ain't no-ways the least dite of call for no such horrid shindy going on outside here every time the wind takes a notion to cant to the east'ard and kick up a bit o' chop. Lord sakes, why, here's folks been running for this harbor in all kinds of chances ever sence Adam was a yearlin', you may say; thick-a-fog, and thick-a-snow, by daytimes and by night-times, blow high or blow low, and nobody did n't use to

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claim but what them two or three old spar-b'ys was a-plenty good enough. I take notice you nor me nor none of our folks here to home never had no great sight of trouble workin' in and out, as a gen'ral rule."

"That's a fact," the Cap'n agreed. "Seems's though we always made out to git along tol'ble easy, and done consid'ble dodging back'ards and forrards them days, too. Here's all the vessels pretty much gone from round here at this day o' the world, but for the reason, prob'ly, that some big herb amongst them yachters kind of got balled up trying to find his way in here some day when the sun happened to slip behind a cloud like, why, gov'ment turns to right off and plants a groaner on them outer laidges, and a plaguy bell-b'y chock aboard on her there to the 'Hue and Cry,' to say nothin' of the horn there to the Light. That's what gov'ment doos, sir, and now, jes' though we wa'n't nigh rid under with taxes a'ready, we folks

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has got to turn to and pay for sich fool-works outen our own wallets, and we 're obleeged to lay awake by night-times and suffer same 's so many blame' thole-pins a-listenin' to the dinged rumpus."

"I'll tell you what 't is," put in Simeon from his high desk. "Betwixt me and you and the win'lass-bitts, from what little ever I seen of them pleasure-yachters, seems 's though it's nothin' only a meracle every soul on 'em ain't all drowned off the fust season."

"So 't is, and no mistake," declared Job Gaskett. "Be jiggered ef it ain't some sing'lar the way them fellers doos make out to skin round the kelps summer-times same 's they will. You tell about how the Lord always cal'lates to take extry good care of pore fools and summer boarders;— looks to me jes' though that 'ere saying ought to be rigged over so 's to rope in the heft of them yachters, too!"

"Oh, Godfrey mighty, now!" Cap'n Round-

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turn exclaimed, "it's safe to jest leave alone of *them* kind for gittin' took the best of care, every time! The way the thing works at this day o' the world, they ain't running no great risk of life, that's dead sure. I would n't wonder myself one mite ef they cal'lated to have groaners and bell-b'ys and b'acons and monymints and sich like the whole length of the coast, all hove in close aboard one another so's they won't never lose sight of the one astarn afore they'll make the next one ahead."

"Yes, for sure," added Skipper Gaskett, with good-natured sarcasm, "and have a life-savin' station on the beach betwixt every b'y, with the strictest old kind of orders never to leave them yachters go out of sight of their glasses."

"Eggsac'ly!" cried Cap'n Roundturn, giving his thigh a resounding slap with a ponderous hand. "That's about what it's coming to. But I take pertikler notice there wa'n't no groaners, nor no bell-b'ys, nor no nothin'

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scursely, the time you and me went, and there was two dozen sail o' vessels them days to every one blame' hooker there is goin' now'days."

"Oh, well, you forgit they had n't commenced yachtin' of it no great, them days," observed Job.

"That 's jest the very thing on 't," returned the captain. "A passel of nothin' only common lumber-coasters and fishermen wa'n't wuth gov'mint's paying no kind of attention to, 't ain't likely. Let all them kind stivver, sink or swim, says gov'mint, but mind ye, quick's ever these here rich young college squirts commences to yacht it a little grain, 't was a cat of another color ter'ble sudden. Set-fire! but seems's though gov'mint could n't git round to stickin' down b'ys and slappin' up lights and b'acons fast enough, they was in sich a ter'ble stew for fear some one of them yachters would git skeered to death or sunthin'. Not but what them kind needs all the

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help they can git to keep clear of trouble, for it's seldom ever I run afoul one on 'em yit that did n't appear to be more or less lackin' like. Maybe they 're born that way to commence with, but I would sooner say that, in room of bein' no benefits to 'em, 't is this here tormented great jag of college-learnin' that makes 'em appear so kind o' numb and logy like; same 's you turn to and load your vessel scuppers under with a hold full of green lumber chock to the hatches, and an eight foot deck-load piled atop of that. You can't never expect to do nothin' with her in a sea, without it is to jest only slump and waller,— you can't git no sail outen her no more'n ef she was a blame' old toad in a bucket o' tar. All the way in God's world ever you can git a move on to her is to wait and let the sea all smoothen down same 's a summer lake; then take and let your wind breezen up good and fresh right chock aft, and maybe you'll make out to git somewheres inside a month o' Sun-

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days. Now it always looked to me a good deal that way with the most of them young college fellers. Ef you cal'late to git anything more 'n jest a nach'al drift outen them kind, you want to stand by and take a master slick chance for it."

"Wall, there now, you!" put in Sheriff Windseye, "ain't that 'ere only jest part and passel o' what I've always been tellin' of ye? You take and ship off a young feller to ary one of them colleges, and, I don't care how smart and likely he is, soon 's ever he gits out again he might full better go up and lay right down back of the meetin'-house there, for all the good ever he'll be to hisself nor nobody else neither."

"Yas, yas, I know jest how that is," assented Cap'n Roundturn. "You can't tell me nothin' in regards to all that 'ere, Cap'n Windseye. But ye see, the fools ain't all dead yit awhile; ef they was, the bulk of these 'ere colleges would bust up inside a year 's time. For king's

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sakes, wha'd' they amount to anyways? I cal'-late my idees and yourn is full better 'n theirs, any day in the week. Why, see here, now!" exclaimed the cap'n, warming up to his subject, "more 'n thirty year sence, I heared a preacher say one time how eddication and rum and money was bound to be the ruination of this country, and set-fire ef 't ain't pretty nigh come true a'ready. You take it betwixt these 'ere rich college fellers and them dod-blowed syndrics, and I want to know what show is they for pore folks same 's me and you?"

"Show!" repeated the sheriff, spitting violently at the stove in disgust, "there ain't the fust mite of show at this day o' the world. Same time, you come to pick up a noospaper, and the chances is you'll run acrosst some place into her where it says everything's all lovely, and the whole country jest fairly boom-in' of it."

"Oh, for sartin," Cap'n Roundturn concurred. "Ef you 're a mind to turn to and

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heave away your money buyin' them things, you'll git holt of no end of krawm. They'll make out to fill ye chock-a-block with lies, and never half try, neither. Still, it always beats tar-water to see how many folks there is that cal'lates to believe every namable thing so long's they see her all printed out in black and white into some plaguy old noos-paper,—same 's the young b'y there, that says one time, 's he, "'Tis so ef 't ain't so, ef dad he says it's so!'"

"Wall, you," said the sheriff, with an air of satisfaction, "Them noospapers never 'll git independent rich out of *me*, now I can tell ye, for it's seldom ever I set down and cast eye into one on 'em. The way 'tis with me, I got a big, overgrowed book up home there, I take and read out on, sometimes when I ain't got nothin' better to do. The woman she give one of them pack-peddlers a dollar bill for her, and put him up over night to boot. Lord, that book 'll weigh better'n three pound."

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“I want to know!” Job Gaskett exclaimed. “Seems’s though you made a trade out of Ikey that time, anyways! I wouldn’t mind a snap same’s that, myself. What’s the name on her, cap’n?”

The sheriff scratched his head for a moment. “Wall, there, you!” he said, “I thought I was goin’ to speak it right out, but I’ll be switched ef I ain’t clean forgot jest what she *is* called, now! All the way ever I can make out to rec’lect nothin’ now’days is to have the woman take and tie a piece o’ yarn round my finger. You see, though, I ain’t troubled that ’ere book for goin’ on a year’s time now, but I can tell ye she’s a complete git-up, all the same. There’s some great old sceneries copied out into her, too; nach’al as ever you see in your life.”

“What be they, mostly? Kind of Bible sceneries like?” suggested Cap’n Roundturn.

“Any God’s slathers on ’em,” the sheriff replied. “Then there’s grists of these ’ere

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portograft sketches all drawed out complete, — there, you! I was jest goin' to speak the name on her that very secont; but swan to man ef 't ain't gone from me ag'in that quick!"

"Talkin' about your books and sich like," said Job, "puts me in mind of that post-office petition of yourn, Cap'n Windseye. How 're you making out along o' that 'ere, anyways!"

"Oh, wall," said the sheriff, with a degree of complacency, "so fur 's ever I know now, things appear to be workin' round my ways, all favor'ble. I guess likely I shall make out to gaft onto that office ag'in soon 's ever the time comes for makin' ary shift."

"You 'd ought to jest heard old man Simpson sayin' of it over the time they fust told him you was 'round gittin' names," remarked Job, as usual bent on slyly thorning his over-reaching neighbor. "The old sir there, he allows you never stand no more show to git that office away from him this time than ary

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one of them clammers down to the Neck there. He says it's goin' to be a case of gold watch or else a wooden leg for ye this time, and he ain't scairt to put up good money you 're bound to stump it 'round for the rest-part of your nach'al life!"

In the general laugh following this slap at the unpopular sheriff, his always flushed face assumed a deeper hue, and he pulled angrily at his dyed chin whiskers.

"Got anything you want to bate on it?" he asked sharply.

"Me? Oh, no. I ain't noways a bating man. Only kind of thought likely you'd be interested to know jest how the old sir figgered it out," remarked Skipper Job, who, while sharing the general dislike for the sheriff, was not wholly averse to seeing the office wrested from the unrighteous Simpson, a man not only politically offensive, but a leading light in the Upper Cove meeting-house, whose attendants and the members of the Cove parish had long

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since regarded one another as entirely unfit for existence.

“I don’t call old Simp wuth payin’ no attention to noways,” continued Sheriff Winds-eye. “I cal’late I’ve got the bulk of the rale hefty paytrons of the office onto my dockymint, and of course Simp he allows he’s got ’em, too, onto hisn. I think’s likely he has, though, of course, jest only his own say-so don’t amount to shucks, for I would n’t want to trust the old creatur’ alone a minute not with a red-hot stove ; but I know well enough our folks always and forever would turn to and sign them petitions both ways, jes’ fast as you’re a mind to draw ’em up. We’ve got so’s we look for that ’ere right straight along ; but ’t won’t make no odds this time, though, for I cal’late I’ve got old Simp right where the wool is good and short, and don’t you think I hain’t. Them folks over there to the office has been gittin’ too blame’ toppy and independent like of late, takin’ their own time to assault

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them letters, and acting always jes' though they did n't give a rap ef they was assaulted right or not. They've been carrin' sail 'most too rank over to Simp's there this last summer, and the Departmint is knowin' to it now in good shape!"

Here the sheriff again spat copiously, and favored his hearers with a combined wink and leer, for which he was justly celebrated.

"How about this 'ere civic-service business, Cap'n Windseye?" asked Job at this point. "Ef gov'mint should take the notion to up and clap all these 'ere little small post-offices under them kind of rules, 't would come nigh being a reg'lar corker on ye, would n't it, though?"

At the bare mention of civil service, nearly all the occupants of the store showed signs of deep agitation. Both the sheriff and Cap'n Roundturn began speaking at once, but the latter's powerful voice soon silenced that of the wheezy official. Never was a bull more

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enraged by the flaunting of a red cloth in his face than was Cap'n Roundturn by the detested words "civic-service."

Rising abruptly from his chair and thrusting his left hand deep in his trousers pocket, his long legs braced well apart, and his right arm free for all manner of violent gesticulation, in his well-known manner the old man opened fire upon a favorite subject.

"That 'ere most damnable, *anarchial*, *monarchial* issue won't never be tol'rated and put up along on by the free people of this 'ere country! God A'mighty knows we are tromped on, and spit on, and drove chock to the wall a'ready, we be, a-twistin' and groanin' un'neath the yoke o' pov'ty; blame' nigh rid to death by these 'ere set-fired syndrics, and subjected to them dod-blowed lords and dooks of England!

"I tell ye, gen'lemen, there's goin' to be a proper time o' reck'nin' now consid'ble handy. The plain, common, middle-sex, every-day run

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of folks ain't always and forever going to stand bein' spit on and stomped on, and made wuss'n nigger slaves on, same 's they be at this day o' the world in Ameriky. The fathers they turned to and waded in blood, and *devastated* the whole land a-fighting' jest sich another *an-*archial, *monarchial*, one-man-power issue as this 'ere, and Godfrey mighty! we folks can turn to and do that same ag'in! Fur's ever I'm concerned, I'll take and see blood shed; yes sir, I will! I'd take and see the ro'ds to this 'ere Cove a-runnin' rivers and catarac's of blood afore ever I'd knuckle under and acknowledge ary sich a tormented one-man-power issue as this 'ere civic-service!

“'Tis them set-fired syndrics, and them black Republicans, and them rich college fellers, I tell ye, that's crowdin' of the people chock to the wall, and j'inin' hands along o' them dod-blowed English lords and dooks to spit on 'em, and trample of 'em un'neath their feet, and make a blame' sight wuss'n nigger

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slaves on 'em, a-tryin' their very dingdest, they be, to set up another *anarchial*, *monarchial*, one-man-power over 'em.

“That's jest eggsac'ly what it's comin' to, without the plain, common, middle-sex class and run o' folks will take and break out into a risin', and turn to and wipe sich tormented krawm chock off'n the face o' the airth!

“'Tain't so much for myself I'm speakin' now, mind ye, for I know well I ain't got only a short spell more to stop round here along on ye, but gen'lemen, lemme tell ye I want to take and hand down to my ancestors the fundymentils o' gov'mint jest as they was give to us by the fathers. The noospapers, and them set-fired syndrics, and them college fellers there, is every one on 'em dead set ag'in us; bought up body and soul by them dod-blowed English lords and dooks, but I tell ye, gen'lmen, ef only the common, every-day run o' folks, the middle-sex, plain style o' folks I mean, them kind that constitutes the

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bone and sinoo of the land, you may say — ef only all them style o' folks will turn to and concentrirate 'emselves together in good shape, I tell ye these 'ere hellish works can be stopped!"

In this manner, for half an hour or more, the doughty old captain scourged the hated civil-service laws, and urged his hearers to deeds of valor. But it must be said that there was no sign of any immediate uprising, so far as they were concerned. On the contrary, a disposition to head him off was once or twice manifested, though it was well understood that, as a rule, such efforts were fruitless, and that Cap'n Roundturn, when once fully started upon the warpath, would pursue it until compelled by lack of breath to drop into his chair with his customary jarring thud.

VIII

THE NERVE OF SKIPPER FAIRWAY

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AT the farther end of that now solitary nook in Killick Cove known as the "Head o' the Tide," a partially caved-in cellar alone marks the site of Squire Jerome Kentledge's spacious oldtime warehouse. Sombre spruces clothe the steep banks close to the smooth granite ledges of the shore, on which crows cunningly drop shell-fish from mid-air, and hold noisy banquets undisturbed.

At half-tide on the ebb is first exposed the flattened hulk of a small vessel so studded by barnacles and shaggy with rock-weed as scarcely to be distinguished from the scattered stones of the ruined wharf close by. Certain old residents of the Cove, however, affirm these half-buried timbers to be the

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bones of the topsail schooner *Accumulator*, a favorite vessel of the dozen owned by Squire Kentledge, and built for him just previous to the war of 1812. Inquire of these old people concerning the worm-eaten hulk at the "Head o' the Tide," or concerning the great cellar-hole in which sumachs have now taken full possession, and together with much talk of the Cove's long-gone prosperous fishing days, you may perhaps hear this story of the pluck once shown by the old schooner's first skipper, and of the reward bestowed upon him by her owner, widely known as much the wealthiest man in the vicinity.

Young Skipper Ethan Fairway was given command of the new craft on her first trip to the Western Banks, and for a time did so well in her that he felt able to marry the girl of his choice, and build himself a small house, on which, however, the Squire held a mortgage.

Then came the war with England, and

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though the embargo did not at this time seriously affect coasting or fishing vessels, yet fear of the enemy's cruisers and privateers induced many owners of such craft to haul them up and strip them. At Squire Kentledge's long wharf lay a dozen sail of vessels, great and small, while securely made fast in other parts of Killick Cove were double as many more, of all sizes and rigs. On a high course of tides several were hauled up through a narrow creek into the marshes behind the village, and it is said that the apprehensive owners of the brig *Effort* never ceased from their labors until, with the aid of oxen and heavy tackle, their wall-sided old craft was forced inland through the salt marshes to the very edge of the woods. Here her upper masts and yards were sent on deck, and the remaining gear thickly decked out with branches from the pine forest. In fact, so complete was the rustication of the good brig *Effort* during this period, that, according to

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legend, a pair of fish-hawks built their nest in her maintop one season, and there raised a family.

But young Skipper Ethan chafed wofully during this long period of enforced idleness, and continually urged the Squire to refit the fleet little Accumulator at least, and let him try running a cargo of potatoes into the blockaded port of Boston. Squire Kentledge, however, though greatly distressed at the sight of his vessels tied up at the wharf unused, still hesitated to venture upon so risky an undertaking.

Autumn came, and found him still undecided, till on a certain frosty morning Ethan Fairway appeared with a marvelous tale of profit achieved by the schooner Amulet, owned in the adjoining town of Kunkett Harbor. This vessel had just returned from a highly successful trip to Boston, and in the estimation of her skipper, Ivory Grommet, with whom Ethan had already conferred,

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the blockade of the port by British frigates was a bugaboo not worth considering. Our own frigates, he said, passed in and out continually, and the grand old Constitution had done so no less than half a dozen times. This being the case, argued Skipper Fairway, it was indeed strange if a nimble little fisherman could not do easily the same.

Furthermore, the Amulet was well known to be but a dull sailer at best, her usual performance being scornfully compared by the eager young skipper to that of a toad in a bucket of tar. How Kunkett folk would chuckle, he urged, if the logy old Amulet and one or two other vessels said to be hastily fitting out at the Harbor, enriched their owners in a single winter, while the entire fleet of Killick Cove remained tied up at the wharves, or hauled up in the marshes among the muskrats and minks!

Now the thought of being in any way outdone by a resident of Kunkett Harbor has

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always been intolerable to all true sons of the Cove. Squire Kentledge was won over at last. In all haste the Accumulator, his newest and fastest schooner, was made ready for sea; while not content with giving her a heavy cargo of potatoes, he insisted upon piling green cordwood on deck until the scuppers were awash, and even Skipper Ethan felt obliged to remonstrate.

Just at dark shortly before Christmas, heaped high above the sheer-poles with her staggering deck-load, the Accumulator slipped out of Killick Cove under a freshening breeze from the northwest, which it was confidently expected would afford a "slant" across to Cape Ann before daylight. Once safely in Cape Ann Harbor, as Gloucester was then known, the vessel's movements would depend upon such news of the enemy as might be heard. Immediately on getting outside the Cove, the Amulet was discerned some distance ahead, also shaping her course for Cape

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Ann, and making the most of the favorable chance by wearing every inch of canvas she possessed.

But the wind, instead of increasing after sundown and probably rendering reefed sails necessary, as was predicted, proved only a short-lived puff from the land; and after running the two vessels offshore at a good gait for an hour or so, began to show unmistakable signs of fluking out. By the time the Accumulator had arrived within hailing distance of her slower consort there was scarcely an air stirring, and both craft lay uneasily tumbling about in a heavy ground-swell which suddenly began setting in from the eastern board.

Gradually the bright starlight of the early night gave place to haze, and by one o'clock a dense, dripping fog shut down, with occasional cat's-paws of cutting wind from the sea. Daylight and sunrise came, bringing no change in conditions except a stark calm, and a con-

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sequent increased thrashing of booms and gaffs as the idly-flapping sails scattered great drops of water on deck at every roll of the vessel.

Suddenly Skipper Fairway's quick ear caught a familiar sound coming from seaward, far off in the impenetrable fog.

"Here's the Amulet clean out here to the east'ard!" he exclaimed to the mate, Israel Kentle. "She must have caught a favor'ble slant of wind someways or 'nother in the night, and made out to overhåul us."

Certainly there were now to be detected the well-known sounds of a vessel nearly becalmed, and rolling heavily in a seaway, — sounds, too, which slowly increased in distinctness, and at length included men's voices.

"Seems's though they must have a dite of wind again now," said Israel Kentle. "We ain't got so much as steerage-way on this hooker of ourn, but still they appear to be drawrin' nigher, steady like. Why in tunkett don't the pore half-fools try to lay their course

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to the west'ard, if they 've got an air o' wind?"

At this moment three prodigious sneezes sounded across the water.

"Sho! You don't mean to tell!" cried Skipper Ethan. "They've shipped Lute Grommet aboard of 'em this trip, and no mistake! Lute he was shipmates along with me a couple of trips in the old Wave-Crest, you know, and it's seldom ever I seen the likes of him for fetching them unrighteous loud sneezes, and always three to a lick, reg'lar as clockwork. Set-fire if he wouldn't nigh take you off'n your feet sometimes, without you had an extry good hand-holt!"

"In room of letting the man stop on deck that way," said the mate, "seems's though they'd a sight better take and heave him into his bunk with the bed-sack atop of him. If he's liable to go off like that when they come to get up amongst them Britishers, he might get 'em into a bad fix like."

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“It beats tar-water whatever possesses ’em to turn to and ship any man this time that’s liable any minute to up and bark right out same’s he doos!” the skipper declared. “Take it anyways mod’rate, and I cal’late that creatur’ would signalize a vessel the whole bigness of Broad Sound, chock from Nahant to Long Island Head, and not half try, neither!”

“Ahoy there, you! ’board the Amulet!” bawled one of Skipper Ethan’s men through his hands. “You best take and shove Lute below with a good stout man to set on his head, without you want he should toll every plague-gone Britisher there is this side of Cape Cod!”

No response to this pleasantry.

“How in the name of reason did ever you fellows make out to steal past us last night like that?” Ethan Fairway himself hallooed. “I’ll make my affidavy you was a mile to loo’ard of us when it shut in thick-a-fog. I guess likely it’s the first time ever that old packet of yourn

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showed stern to anything afloat, and risk it!"

Still no reply. But the sharp creak of blocks immediately followed, as though sheets were being trimmed. Also the noise of slatting sails suddenly ceased entirely.

"They've got more air from somewheres," said the skipper, with a glance aloft at his own flapping canvas. "Seems's though they was all hands of 'em consid'ble glum this morning, though. Wonder if old Ivory Grommet cal'lates that he's all the one around here has got any right to try this running potatoes into Boston?"

"Skipper," Israel Kentle said, as he peered intently into the black bank of fog, "be you certain sure in your mind it *is* Ive Grommet off here to wind'ard? It jest now come into my head that vessel rolls kind of slow to what the Amulet doos, and then again —"

"I've got the loom of her, whatever she is!" the skipper broke in. "Here! Off here more to the south'ard. See? Plague on her, that's

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a big overgrown vessel! 'Tis a brig, you, and fit to swing the Amulet for a quarter-boat! Shove your hellum hard down quick!" he cried to the man nearest the tiller. "Here comes a breath o' wind for us at last,—now trim everything down good and flat, for that'll be our best holt to shake that tormented packet. Guess likely her room will be full better than her comp'ny for a spell!"

The sails of the Accumulator now filled with a few unsteady puffs from the eastward; the advance guard of a chill, snow-laden blast from this quarter, which soon began to ruffle and darken the long leaden surges. Meantime the strange vessel had partially emerged from the fog, and at this instant displayed the English flag in plain view.

"Ahoy there!" roared a hoarse voice from her deck. "Heave to, till we send a boat alongside!"

"She's a blamed privateer, by all that's holy!" cried Ethan Fairway. "Oh, Lord!" he

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groaned, "I'm afraid she's got us foul this time, and no mistake! If only we wa'n't loaded so scand'lous deep, and all by the head with this great jag of cordwood, there'd be some show for us. Give her a rap full, though, and keep everything drawing; we won't cry baby yet awhile!"

The brig's crew were now seen to be making additional sail with the greatest dispatch. She showed herself to be a large, powerful-looking vessel, and as she fore-reached eagerly and buoyantly over the adverse seas, it was but too evident that the deep-plunging little schooner, speedy though she ordinarily was, under present circumstances stood small chance of escape.

"Come to, or I'll fire into you!" again roared the hoarse voice across the fast ruffling water.

"Don't put yourself out none, neighbor!" cried Skipper Fairway. "I should kind of like to have a little mite of a try along with you on the wind —"

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“Give him a shot!” called the voice, and instantly, Bang! Splash! came a ball, striking the water but a few feet ahead.

“Makes out to have a pop-gun aboard of him, sure enough, don’t he!” the skipper said coolly, as he took the tiller himself. “Now,” said he to his men, “turn to the whole of you for every pound you’re worth, and heave over this cordwood, without you want to spend the rest-part of your lives in limbo, like’s not! Make it fly, now, and sing out for me to spell ye!”

Bang! Zip! came a second cannon-ball in close proximity, followed directly by a third still better-judged shot, which severed the throat-halyards like a knife, allowing the main-sail to sag into a shapeless bag at once. Then Skipper Ethan Fairway realized that his jig was up without a doubt, and bringing his schooner into the wind, she was quickly made a prize of the Halifax privateer Crown Jewel, on board of which craft he and his men were

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soon transferred as prisoners. All articles of value were unceremoniously taken from them, and preparations at once began for sending the captured vessel to the Provinces. New halyards were rove off, and numbers of men fell to work hurriedly removing on board the brig quantities of potatoes and fuel, of which she stood badly in need.

Meanwhile the weather seemed at last to have settled upon a definite line of action, and was getting to work with such effect that passage between the two craft was fast becoming difficult and dangerous. The wind had backed squarely into the grim northeast, and with occasional flurries of fine snow, already piped from that dreaded quarter in a way most foreboding to those knowing from bitter experience what a northeaster is capable of on this coast at that time of year.

Darkness began early to settle over the rushing, foam-streaked seas. Striking now in furious squalls with ever-lessening lulls between,

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the gale steadily increased in strength, till finally a blinding snowstorm shut down in earnest, and the privateersman reluctantly decided to abandon his valuable prize. Deep-loaded as she was, it seemed hopeless to contend against a winter gale such as this bid fair to be; while running to leeward for a harbor on this dangerous and hostile coast was as little to his mind. He wisely chose, therefore, to get his men and boats on board again as quickly as possible, and put to sea for an offing. Those of his crew on the Accumulator were with difficulty hailed and ordered to return, after first setting the vessel on fire.

Up to this time Skipper Ethan Fairway, though filled with the gloomiest thoughts, had borne the loss of his vessel with manly resignation. The proposal to destroy her before his eyes in this manner, however, proved the last straw, and called forth such a frenzied outburst of expostulation as at length seemed to touch even the hard-fea-

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tured privateersman, who through certain brusque inquiries had already gained some idea of his prisoner's home affairs.

"Tell you what I'll do, Cap'n What's-your-name," he said. "If you think enough of your little hooker to take chances in her *alone* to-night, I'll set you aboard, and be hanged to you! Come! Quick, now! What do you say?"

"I'll do it!" cried Ethan Fairway, without an instant's hesitation.

"The more fool you! but mind now," said the other, "in case you ever do set foot on land again, remember I give the vessel back to *you*, and damn the owners!"

In vain the members of his crew begged to accompany the young skipper. The privateer was already short-handed from having only the day before put a prize crew on board a Newburyport vessel captured in full view from the shore, a fact which he now had good reason to feel insured him a warm reception

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in case of disaster on this coast; and he absolutely refused to spare a single man. Whereat the Accumulator's crew swore roundly that under no circumstances would they lift a hand to assist in working the brig. The English captain only laughed grimly, and affirmed that he knew of infallible means for inducing them to turn to when needed.

All four of his men then entreated Ethan Fairway not to throw away his life in an attempt so certainly bootless, but the skipper was not to be swerved a hair. It was wholly through him, he said, that the voyage was undertaken, and to his stupid blunder alone was to be laid the capture of the vessel; an affair which, unless expiated in some way, he felt would render him the laughing-stock of the coast, and blight all chance of prosperity at sea. His bull's-eye watch and leather-bound Testament were returned to him, as deaf to all remonstrances he bade his men farewell, and in the fast-gathering gloom of

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this wild December night was once more put upon the deck of his schooner.

To the credit of the boat's crew which transferred him, be it said that, impelled to admiration of his courage, in a rough way, they not only expressed no little sympathy for him, but strongly urged him to abandon so foolhardy an undertaking. Failing in this latter, all hands went to work with a will, and did what little was possible in the short time remaining to make his situation a shade less desperate. Sails were tied down to close reefs, the bonnet was removed from the jib, and two long strings of cable overhauled on deck forward, ready for instant use. Each man of them then shook hands with Skipper Fairway, and left him as one doomed to certain death, if not through the foundering of his vessel, then most surely by being cast away to leeward on the treacherous sands of Ipswich and Essex, or the granite ledges of far-reaching Cape Ann.

And truly a more perilous position can

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scarcely be imagined than that in which Ethan Fairway voluntarily placed himself by way of atonement for his disastrous mistake of the morning. Alone on a small, overloaded vessel, reaching home in the teeth of the gale was out of the question. Should he heave her to, and succeed in the very doubtful experiment of riding out the gale at sea, as the privateersman proposed doing, risk of recapture seemed great, for with a return of fair weather and favoring winds the temptation to send the valuable little vessel home as a prize might be more than his late captor could resist.

With a freezing northeast snowstorm already upon him, and the long December night ahead, Skipper Ethan decided that making a harbor to leeward was his only chance. Newburyport lay abeam somewhere, but its dreaded bar was impassable in half the sea then running; Ipswich, Essex, and Annisquam were not to be thought of for the same reason, and to gain the secure haven of Gloucester, Cape Ann

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with all its sunken dangers must first be rounded.

What with drifting about in the fog and strong tidal currents of Ipswich Bay half the night, to say nothing of lying hove to so many hours in company with the privateer, the present position of the Accumulator was largely a matter of guesswork at best. Guessing at his point of departure, and then running blindly for Cape Ann in the blackness of the night before a howling northeast snowstorm, might well be thought a temptation of Providence.

But the Fairways of Killick Cove have always been reckoned as much at home upon the water as loons, and while young Skipper Ethan could by no means feel sure of his exact position, yet taking into account the previous shifts of wind, with the set of ebb and flood in the bay, he formed an idea of his vessel's general trend during the past ten hours, and putting the helm up, by the dim light of the binnacle's sputtering tallow candle brought

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the Accumulator on a course which he had faith to believe would carry him safely past the Cape and its sunken reefs.

Less than two hours' headlong rush before the storm proved the excellence of his judgment, for though the tail of the furious breaker on the Salvages Ledge actually broke across the schooner's deck as she drove wildly past, yet shortly afterwards Thatcher's Island's welcome light blinked through the swirling snow, and Ethan Fairway felt that the most critical part of his mad undertaking was over.

Still, formidable dangers remained to be met. Eastern Point had no light at the time, and, unassisted by any of the present aids to navigation in the shape of horns and whistling buoys, how the skipper not only found his way around the Cape, but beat the vessel up to a safe anchorage in Cape Ann Harbor that night, is only explained by the fact of his being a Fairway, and as familiar with the rocky coast as with the straggling roads of Killick Cove.

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For four days he lay with both anchors ahead, storm-bound in the harbor. On the fifth, he got under way with help from a neighboring vessel, and having a favoring breeze from the south, quickly made the short run up the shores of the Cape to Salem, where relatives were living. As he let go anchor well inside the guns of the fort, loud hails came from shore, and upon looking up the Amulet's yawl-boat was seen pulling off towards him from a snarl of shipping lying at the wharves. Half an hour more found the Accumulator warped in and made fast with the others, her young skipper already a hero of the first magnitude. Nothing of the privateer had been seen by the Amulet's people, though they plainly heard the three guns to windward, and greatly feared their consort had shared the fate of the Newburyport craft, news of whose capture had spread like wildfire in the vicinity.

A letter was at once sent to Squire Kent-

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ledge, describing the situation and asking for instructions. The Squire, having, as the saying is, 'sweat blood' since hearing of the privateer's successful swoop off Newburyport, at once ordered in most positive terms that no further risks be taken. The cargo was to be sold, if possible, in Salem, but on no account whatever was the vessel to leave port again until peace was declared. The Amulet's owners, also sharing now in the common scare, ordered her stripped and put in charge of a keeper, while her crew returned home.

But Skipper Fairway, having once lost his vessel, refused again to leave her, and being soon after joined by his wife, the young couple fell to housekeeping in the schooner's warm cabin below decks, until on Monday the 15th of February, 1813, when a messenger arrived post-haste from Boston, bringing the joyful news of peace. Before night even, the crowded wharves resounded with the din of the calker's mallet, the creak of blocks, and

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the cries of men engaged in fitting for sea the great fleet then owned in the flourishing port of Salem. Everywhere on the coast was a frantic cry for shipwrights and sailmakers, while crews to man the long-idle vessels were in especial demand. Not even a boy could Ethan Fairway secure to help him, and so, manfully assisted by his wife, he re-bent the sails, and taking advantage of a fresh southwest breeze early one morning, soon after dark shot up to Squire Kentledge's long wharf at Killick Cove, and delivered the vessel to her owner.

Now unlikely as it is that the intrepid skipper expected any especial recognition for thus restoring the trim little schooner, certain it is that he had no thought of a reward so unique as that which awaited him in the dingy counting-room at the Head o' the Tide. On the day following his arrival, he was conducted thither by the unctuous Squire, and there formally presented with a straw hat ; not a strictly *new*

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hat to be sure, but a still serviceable article it was which Squire Kentledge took from its peg in the office, and, carefully removing all traces of dust therefrom, bestowed upon Ethan Fairway in appreciation of his valorous deed. And in addition to this munificent act on the part of his owner, it is recorded that before snow again flew in the fall of the year Skipper Ethan Fairway was induced to take command of a fine brig just launched by several townsmen for the West India trade.

For many years Killick Cove has known no representative of the once influential name of Kentledge. Under the great elms of a quaint little graveyard at the Cove, standing high above the leaning, moss-grown stones of slate which surround it, is an ornate shaft of marble erected to the memory of Jerome Kentledge Esq're. Around its base are chiseled inscriptions enumerating his many virtues, detailing the extent of his mercantile transactions, and setting forth the great grief with which news

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of his death was received by the whole countryside.

Nevertheless, at the present day in the now sleepy little town where he lived so long, Jerome Kentledge Esq're is chiefly remembered in connection with the rescue of his favorite schooner, among whose brown timbers at the deserted Head o' the Tide seals sometimes stretch themselves at low-water slack, and lie basking and grunting in the summer sun.

IX

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DURING the first few years of my practice in the village of Killick Cove I was not infrequently called in attendance upon Robert Henderson, a brother-in-law and former shipmate of my especial friend, old Skipper Job Gaskett. Though a considerably younger man than Skipper Job, Henderson was wholly incapacitated for any but the lightest kind of work, by reason of an accident which befell him on shipboard in early manhood. His dark face was still strikingly handsome, though, in view of his pitiable physical condition, it was somewhat difficult to credit the oft-repeated assertion that previous to that frightful mishap at sea Robert Henderson was generally accounted the champion athlete of Killick Cove.

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As to any particulars concerning the accident, it seemed that Henderson himself, as well as his usually communicative brother-in-law, was strangely reticent. Indeed, it occurred to me more than once that this indisposition to talk of the matter even extended to the townspeople in general. At all events, for three years after my arrival at the Cove I had never succeeded in gleaning anything further than that, through a fall from the mast-head of a fishing schooner only a short time before his marriage, Henderson was shockingly deformed, and had since been almost wholly dependent upon his wife for support.

Mrs. Henderson was a large and comely though somewhat careworn-looking woman, with the intensely black eyes common to all the Gasketts, and much of the kindly expression of face so characteristic of her brother Job. As time wore on, my admiration steadily increased for the industry and self-sacrificing devotion constantly manifested in the care of

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her crippled husband. In fact, the wife's daily line of conduct seemed to me nothing less than heroic, though perhaps many of the neighbors had grown to regard it rather too much as a matter of course.

When able, Robert Henderson appeared to occupy himself chiefly with braiding rag mats for sale, though being an acknowledged expert in the mysteries of "twine," local fishermen sometimes brought their damaged nets to him for repairs. Still, the injury to his spine was such that for long periods he remained helplessly propped in an armchair, neither able to sit erect nor to lie upon his back with any comfort.

But the indomitable wife labored on unceasingly, rising at unheard-of hours and working often far into the night, doing washing, ironing, and sewing at her home, or housework for the villagers when her husband's condition would admit of her leaving him. I had many times noticed old Skipper

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Job hard at work upon the great pile of spruce cordwood which he regularly hauled to his sister's dooryard during the winter, and learned incidentally that this brotherly kindness was absolutely the only help, outside of desired work, which the plucky woman could be induced to accept from any source.

It was little enough that I could ever do for her husband's relief, but my curiosity about him kept increasing. At length, alone with me in my office on a rainy autumn afternoon, Job Gaskett decided to let me into the secret of his brother-in-law's story.

"Well, you, doctor," he began, "I been quite a few times on the p'int of telling you in regards to all this 'ere, for it doos make out to be consid'ble of a little hist'ry, and no mistake. The thing of it is, though, sister Susy Mary May down here, she never wanted it should be made no kind of gossup-talk like, 'round amongst folks, though come to the matter of that, every one of the old seed-

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folks here to this Cove are knowin' to the whole business, and have been, pretty much ever since the thing happened. But, you see, Susy Mary there, she's always felt so master sore in regards to it,—she's kind of queer made like, you know, and, well,—you could n't never once beat it out of her head that she was all the one to blame in the fust place for Bob Henderson's losin' his hand-holt aboard of old Skip' Tristam Marston that time, and staving the life outen him on deck, same's he done."

"She to blame for his fall!" I exclaimed in surprise. "Why, she was n't on board the vessel at the time, was she?"

"No, no, not a mite of it!" said Job. "She was right here to home, and the vessel—that's the Heart's Desire, that old Deacon Parkinson owned in them days—she was layin' hove to clean off here on Le Have, in the heaviest breeze o' wind ever I seen since the time I fust commenced to go."

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“Oh, well, then,” I said, “your sister had urged him to go on that particular trip —”

“No she never once! Not a mite! Not a single mite!” the skipper broke in vehemently. “She done every namable thing in God’s world to hender him and me, too, from ever once steppin’ foot aboard the vessel, anyways. She hung right to it from the fust commencement that the old Desire was tetched, and always had been, and always would be, and seems’s though she had the rights of it, too, for it turned out there never was no such a Jonah ever went out of this Cove as what she was. Plague on the old jade, she never earnt no man a dollar, not ary once in the world, and seems’s though there would n’t be no end to the folks that kep’ gittin’ drowned and kilt and all stove up aboard of her jes’ long’s she stayed atop o’ water. Yes, sir, Susy Mary May had got wind of what *she* was, from way back; I’m tol’ble satisfied of that. Susy wa’n’t anyways scairt to up and

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talk it right out in meetin' neither, as any God's quantity ashore here can tell ye to-day. I think's likely there was others besides her that misdoubted if the vessel wa'n't going to be a reg'lar-built Jonah, but seems's though Susy was about all the one that dasst up and spit it right out good and plain, them days."

"Yet you say she felt responsible for Henderson's accident," I said. "This beats me all hollow. I won't try to guess again."

"No, doctor," said Job, "you'd full better take and give it up right off now, for 't ain't anyways likely ever you'd hit it, not if you kep' guessin' stiddy for a month of Sundays. I cal'late now to turn to and tell you what about the whole thing, for Susy she allowed only jest this morning she did n't know as she cared any great if you was to hear, bein' as you've always tended out on Bobby so reg'lar, and then again, prob'ly would git holt of some of it sooner or later, anyways. All is, says she, while you're at it, take and tell him

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the whole of it, without nothin' skipped nor anyways changed 'round. That 's Susy all over, you know, — she always did talk it jes' so up and down like. Seems 's though she cal'lates the plain truth 'll make out to stand its own weight any day in the week.

“So to take and go clean away back to the fust commencement like,” the skipper went on, with his piercing black eyes intently fixed upon mine, “Bob Henderson in them days was about the best lookin' and the likeliest young buck ever was raised to this Cove. He stood jest six foot in his stockin'-feet, and was withey as ary wildcat. Lord sakes! we had folks here them days that run away of the idee they was some wras'lers, till maybe they 'd ketch holt of Bob Henderson, and git hove so quick they'd cal'late the devil hisself kicked 'em on end! But come to take it aboard vessel was where he'd most gin'ally cut up the greatest monkey-shines and ructions, after all. I rec'lect one little trick of hisn in pertik'ler

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was to take and lay a bate along of somebody aboard, how many seconts time he 'd be agoing from the end of the main-boom aloft, and chock down to the bowspreet-end again, that is, you know, take it when we 'd be layin' to anchor some place or other. Set-fire! He 'd swarm up the topping-lift hand-over-hand like a streak; skip right acrosst the spring-stay to the foremast on the dead run, and slide down the jib-stay afore ever you 'd say Jack Robinson! That's jest how spry he was. And come to take him all togged out in his Sunday best, with his hair oiled up good and curly like, with his shirt-collar hove wide open, and a blame' great big black silk tie streamin' loose much as two foot long, why, you would n't make out to scare up a smarter appearin' young feller nowheres.

“Come to that, he *was* smart, too—smart's a whip. He 'd been high-line aboard vessel nigh every trip, till we come to ship aboard that plague-gone old Jonah of Deacon Parkin-

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son's there, and he could got a vessel of his own took up for him here to this Cove the time he was twenty year old, easy as rolling off'n a log, if only he 'd a mind to, and had said the word. But the way he looked at it, there was a plenty time for that ahead, and he 'd lievser not git tied down so-fashion yit awhile, nor turn to and git married yit, ary one. Kind of happy-go-lucky like, you see Bobby always was in them days, and I think 's prob'le that was one thing made him so ter'ble takin' amongst the gals ashore here.

"He 'd lost his mother afore there was much of any bigness to him, you un'stand, and seems 's though him and the old sir never hitched hosses to home there extry good, so 's Bobby he was pretty much on his own hook, you may say, and loved to heave his money right and left in all manner of fool-works, till the heft of the gals ashore here all cal'lated there wa'n't nobody 'round here could hold a candle 'side of Bob Henderson.

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“By spells he ’d be a little grain sweet on one, and then ’t would be somebody else for a spell,—kind of touch and go like, ’round amongst ’em, without never once meaning no hurt at all to ary one on ’em, you know, but same time, fust thing ever he knowed, there was two or three of them gals commenced to git all broke up over Bob Henderson, and about the wusst off amongst the lot was my oldest sister, Susy Mary May, down here.

“Susy she had n’t never lacked for beaus,—not a mite of it. Lord sakes, she could had her pick of dozens to keep comp’ny along of here to this Cove them days, but seems ’s though Bob Henderson was all the one ever she’d look at twice, and him she’d always been kind of gone on, since the two growed to have any bigness to ’em at all.

“Bob and me was always thick as mud together, you know, and quick ’s ever I seen jest how the thing was workin’ with Susy Mary May, why I up and says to him man-fashion,

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like this: 'Bob,' 's I, 'this 'ere won't never do in God's world. You got to call a halt on this pretty sudden, and no gittin' 'round it, neither. Here 's a passel o' them gals,' 's I, 'gittin' to be a good deal same 's so many toads un'neath a harrow, all on account of your set-fired back-in' and fillin'; now,' 's I, 'fur 's ever Susy Mary May is concerned, I want you should jest heave to and show your colors good and plain, or else up hellum right off, and bear away hull-down to loo'ard like.'

"Well, sir, Bobby he seen quick enough that I wa'n't noways unraytionable. He was a good clever soul as ever was, and never once cal'lated to do ary one of them gals a mite of hurt, and in pertik'ler not Susy Mary May, for he let on to me this time that soon's ever it come down to the fine thing, he sot a sight more by her than all the rest-part of 'em put together. Same time, seems's though he didn't feel jest like poppin' no question to nobody jest yit awhile, and so the amount of the story

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was, that kind of gradual like, at fust, he commenced to sheer off, and finally quit his coming up to our place there, pretty much altogether.

“Susy Mary May she wa’n’t never the kind to take on no great, you know; that is, not so’s folks would be like to see, anyways; but Lord! up home there we soon see the difference, now I tell ye what. The gal wa’n’t nach’ally noways bad-lookin’ them days, if I do say it, but pretty quick she commenced to show it in her face how bad she felt, same’s if she’d had a fit of sickness, till bimeby her own folks would n’t but jest reckernize her. I always rec’lect jest what father says, the time he come home from the Cape Shore right in the thick of it, and the ter’ble look of the gal struck him all aback like. ‘Set-fire! Susy Mary, you!’ ’s he, ‘what is it ails ye? Why!’ ’s he, ‘your face looks to be all tide-rips and calm-slicks, the whole bigness of it!’ That’s about how she did look, too, for it took holt of her

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the wusst way, and the thing of it was, she did n't grow no better of it, by a long chalk.

“Finally, it come around that Bobby took a notion to ship aboard of old Skip' Tris' Marston in the Heart's Desire, on one of them long-drawn-out salt-trips to the banks, when they cal'lated to stop till they wet all their salt, if it took a year's time. There was quite a few of the gals 'round here that never liked the sound of that, not for a cent, but come to take Susy Mary May, and she was nerved up a sight wuss 'n ever, because she'd claimed all along that vessel was tetched from the day of her launchin', and wa'n't fit for no living man to go into, noways. Susy she was always extry cute about ketchin' onto all them kind of things, you un'stand, and I guess likely it ruther runs in the blood, maybe, for I know you could n't never learn mother nothin' new in regards to 'em, neither.

“But Bob, he fit ter'ble shy of our place right along, same 's he says to me he cal'-

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lated to for a spell, anyways, and never once give Susy no chance to say boo to him in regards to the vessel, nor nothin' else. She kep' right at me, though, early and late, but there! I could n't see as it was any great hunt of mine to take and give the vessel a bad name so quick. Old Deacon there, he'd went to work and put every cent he could rake and scrape into her, and I did n't want to have no hand in doing the old sir no manner of hurt. Then again, I wa'n't any too anxious for Bobby to stop to home anyways jest then; and so the long and short of it was, he stowed his dunnage aboard, and went into her on the salt-trip, though when it come to the p'int of breaking the anchor out, and filling the vessel away, be jiggered if it didn't look for a spell some as if Susy Mary May and her old black cat was going to be too much for 'em."

"How do you mean, skipper?" I asked.
"You 're getting too deep for me again."

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“Oh, well, there! Black cats is cur'ous creatur's, you know,” replied Job, with a slight laugh. “Take it in them days, folks ashore here would turn to and clap a black cat un'neath of a washtub over night, so 's to hender ary vessel from sailing next day, whatever the reason might be. 'T was always and forever a great notion with the gals here to this Cove, to keep their beaus to home if they wanted, though come right to the truth of the matter, there was precious few that knowed jest the ins and outs of the thing so 's to work it in proper good shape, but still I guess it was seldom ever a vessel set out to get her anchor in them days, without somebody ashore had n't went to work and shoved a black cat un'neath a tub the night before. Sometimes it would act complete, and then again it would n't appear to be no great account anyways, but they always kep' tryin' of it on right along stiddy, jest the same.

“Take this pertik'ler time I'm speaking

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about, though, and come to heave short aboard the vessel early in the mornin' they cal'lated to make a start, why be jiggered if the anchor had n't ketched afoul of something master heavy on bottom, and all the way in God's world ever they got clear of it was to heave in every blame' inch they was good for on the win'lass, and then jest set down and wait for the flood-tide to break it out in the afternoon, someways. Come to find out, blowed if they did n't finally fetch up a great big water-soaken chunk of the old brig President Adams, that was scuttled right here in 1812, for fear the British was going to gobble her up one time. The crown of the anchor was bent up clean ag'in the shank with the set-fired strain on it, so's they was risin' three days' time gittin' ready for another start."

"You're pretty sure the delay was owing to the black cat and the tub?" I ventured to inquire.

"Well, black cats has always been called

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consid'ble cur'ous creatur's, you know," the skipper answered, perhaps a little evasively. "I've seen some awful queer works all along of them style o' cats, and I guess likely it pays in the long run not to take too much chances with 'em. Them that has, has wish 't they never, to my own knowin', afore this. But it wanted something besides a black cat to hold Bob Henderson to home that time, and I says to Susy Mary there was no good her tryin' of it over again. She might make out to hender him some consid'ble, and put folks to no end of trouble about making a start, for she was cute in regards to all them kind of things, and there 's no gittin' 'round it; but Bob cal'lated to *go* that time any old how, and that 's all there was to it. 'What is, *is*, and what was, *was*,' as I heard a preacher say one time, and it 's all the way there is to look at it, too.

"But you take Susy Mary May that time, and seems 's though she could n't see it in no

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such a light. After the vessel once left, she appeared to calm down some consid'ble, but our folks took good notice she commenced slippin' up to Aunt Polly Belknap's place on the Neck ro'd there, every chance she could git, and they soon see very plain there was something in the wind betwixt them two.

“This 'ere Aunt Polly that you 've heard tell of already, she was one of them cur'ous old ancient style women-folks we always used to have 'round here them days, — older 'n the North Star, the whole batch on 'em was, I cal'late. There was old Sairy Binney, — she was jest afore my time, Sairy was, but one o' them reg'lar-built old fly-by-nights, and chock to her eyes in some dev'lish works or other, the heft of the time. Awful spiteful and mean actin' like, accordin' to all tell. Lord sakes! I've heard say she was mean enough to up and steal dough off'n a blind chicken, if she once took a notion that way. Then there was old Hetty Moye, that lived up Moye's Lane only

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a short piece; she was a good clever old soul as a rule, without she happened to git down on ye too bad for something or other, and them times you best stand from under. Then right next to her come old Aunt Polly, and her I rec'lect all about, plain 's can be. Some on 'em here now'days pretends to say she was the very last one of them old ancient women-folks same 's we used to have; but Godfrey mighty! I dunno of anything that riles me up same 's it doos to hear 'em take and talk such rubbidge.

“I know it for a fact, doctor, there's a woman alive right here to this Cove at this very day o' the world that can turn to and heave a project full better 'n what ever Aunt Polly Belknap could! Still, that ain't neither here nor there, jest now. Aunt Polly, she was always mostly in cohoots with the young fry here to home, and in pertik'ler with us young chaps that went fishin' them days. You could frog it out here to her place on the old Neck

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ro'd with your little batty of tea, or tobacco, or snuff, and buy a good run of luck for a fishing trip to the Cape Shore in the spring o' the year, or to the Bay, or clean to Labrador, if only you worked it so's to git the right side of her in proper good shape. Then she'd turn to and mix ye up a love-potion any time you wanted; but after all, givin' full fares and mod'rate weather on them fishin' trips was always counted Aunt Polly's best holt. That's how she'd got her name up the most, anyways, and you can bate there was few here to this Cove them days that missed tryin' to fix things all tanto along of old Aunt Polly, afore ever they'd dasst p'int a vessel's nose out past the Neck in the spring o' the year.

“But soon's ever it come to heavin' a project, I dunno as she was so much to home. I kind of misdoubt if she was, though off and on she must done quite a little of it, too; but seems's though she went to work and made

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a ter'ble old mess of it the time she un'took to heave one for Susy Mary May. Susy Mary, she was always a little grain chummy like along of Aunt Polly, same 's mother was, too, and so you see finally, after the Heart's Desire had been gone a fortni't's time or more, seems 's though the old lady was coaxed into layin' in with the gal to heave a project after her."

"Hold on just a minute, skipper!" I interrupted. "You're talking Greek to me now. I can't follow your story at all till you explain a little what this 'project' business was."

"Well, well," said Job, "that's jest what I'm comin' at, fast as ever I can git 'round to it. Still, them projects was master cur'ous workin' things, and I ain't so sure as I can give ye no great shakes of an idee in regards to 'em; but we'll say that you was clean gone on some gal or other, you know; or maybe that the gal was kind of mopin' 'round

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after *you*, — it don't make no great odds which, as I know of. One or the other of ye finally takes and goes down to Aunt Polly's little place there, and says to her like this: 'I want you should turn to and rig it for me so 's this gal, or this 'ere feller, whichever it is, will commence to git real soft on *me*, double-quick time, savvy?' The cal'lation was to have them projects work a good deal same 's a love-potion done, only they 'most always take holt a sight more, and cost consid'ble high, and besides, there was certain times when you could n't never coax the old lady to try one on anyways, not for no price.

"I rec'lect for one thing, it had always got to be on a growin' moon, or else she would n't once look at ye; but then there was quite a few other things, too, that had to be jes' so at the time, or else it was no go. She was square as a brick about it, old Aunt Polly always was; if things wa'n't workin' just right for no project, she would n't hesitate a secont to up and

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tell anybody so, right out spango. But if everything seemed to be workin' same's she wanted it should, why then you'd got to take and turn your stockings wrong side out seven nights a-runnin', and you'd got to cut seven notches into a stick off'n a witch-hazel, and turn yourself around seven times to the right for every notch you cut, a-wishin' your wish all the time, you un'stand, hard as ever you could. Same time Aunt Polly never cal'lated to set stock still with her hands folded, by consid'ble. She was going through *her* rinktums, too, of course, but jest what they was, she always took plaguy good care never to let anybody find out. She was consid'ble sly, you know, same's all the rest-part of them old fly-by-nights always was, and never cal'lated to give away none of the tricks of her trade, and wa'n't noways to blame for that, neither, as I can see.

“Where I always claimed Aunt Polly *was* to blame, and done wrong that time, was her never once letting on to Susy Mary May jest

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how them projects was liable to work on some folks, by spells, — that is, I mean the set-fired start they was apt to give anybody sometimes, soon 's ever they fust commenced to take a holt in good shape.”

Here Skipper Gaskett extended his brown left hand towards me, and called attention to a scar which extended nearly across the palm.

“The time I was twenty year old,” he said, “a woman that don’t live so very fur away from this house to-day turned to and hove a project at me when I was aboard of old Skip’ Tommy Goodsoe. ’T was jest my luck to be to work on deck throatin’ codfish this very time, and quick ’s ever that dod-blowed project took holt of me, I fetched a jump like, and made out to shove that big double-aidged throater plumb into my hand here, so ’s I was crippled-up with it for a month’s time. That ’s how I’m knowin’ to it myself jest the way them things was liable to work. They would n’t always act jes’ so, of course, for I’ve heard tell of folks that never

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once knowed jest when the project was hove; but Aunt Polly must knowed what about 'em fast enough, and seems 's though she 'd ought to told a young thing, same 's Susy Mary May was, to be a little grain careful like.

“ But there! Seems 's though she never once yipped. She and Susy Mary fixed it all up betwixt 'em there, and hove it slam-bang after the vessel,—hardest fend off. Now jes' see how like the very mischief the plaguy thing worked that time. That very same night it blowed a livin' gale o' wind clean off-shore there on the tail of Le Have, jest where the Heart's Desire was layin' hove to under close-reefed fores'l, and jumpin' into it endways for God's sakes. The plague-gone contrairy old jade never would lay nowheres nigh the wind when she was hove to, you see,—she 'd always want to lay broad-off, and waller in the seas same 's a blame' hog-trough would; but this time in pertik'ler 't was rough as a grater out there, and seems 's though she was having



THE HEART'S DESIRE WAS LAYIN' HOVE TO

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one of her wusst spells. Bimeby the gaff-tops'l commenced to slat adrift up on the mainmast-head (for 't was blowin' like a man and breezen-in' on every minute jest fair scand'lous), till Bob Henderson he un'took to shin aloft and stop the thing down into shape again.

"Nobody else aboard would n't tetch of it, you see, bein' as it wa'n't no fool of a job to git aloft and stick there jest then, leave alone stowing no tops'ls, — still I know well Bobby would been all tanto, and would done up the work complete; but where the trouble come in was, jest at this very same minute be jiggered if them two women-folks in home here did n't turn to and let her go with that set-fired project! We reckoned it all up afterwards, and 't was jest eggsactly that same time o' night, to a dot. Wa'n't that some horrid, you?"

"Then you believe that Aunt Polly knew how hard it was storming out at sea at the time?" I asked.

"Knowed it? 'Course she knowed all about

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it!" Job answered decisively. "You leave alone of *her*, soon 's ever it come to keepin' tabs on the weather! The thing of it was, she never once stopped to think! She was extry good friends to Bobby them days, and would n't done him no manner of hurt for the world,—all is, she never once stopped to give it no secont thought that time, or else she never half knowed her business fur 's ever them projects was concerned. Anyways, pore Bobby he lost his hand-holt by reason of it, and come down on deck hell-bent, jest be-aft the scuttle-butt.—Lord sakes! They said he like to have went chock through the deck altogether! 'T was an unrighteous old clip he struck it, and his hip-bone, they cal'lated it must been, jabbed a hole in them deck-plank that they used to take and show to folks jes' long 's the vessel was owned here to this Cove.

"Well, they took and picked the pore devil up, and lugged him below for dead, but seems 's

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though he come to next morning a little dite, and so they give it to her straight for home, wearin' every sol'tary rag of sail the schooner would stivver under, and still stay atop o' water.

"Come to find out, Bob Henderson was all stove up so bad that every one of them three doctors allowed they never once see no such hard-lookin' sight in all their born days! There wa'n't ary one on 'em but said he was spoke for inside a few hours' time at the furthest, but they turned to and lugged him off down home to his father's place there, cal'latin' to see him git through 'most any minute on the ways down along. All the women-folks there was to home there was Bobby's old Aunt Marshy, that kep' house for the old sir them days, and the heft of the time she was all crippled-up with the rheumatiz so 's she could n't but jest wag.

"But Lord A'mighty! Quick's ever Susy Mary May once got wind of what was up, she

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lep' out of the house same's a wild creatur', and streaked it straight down acrosst them fields right plumb into the room where the pore feller was layin' to; and by fire, doctor! she never once come out through the front gate again for goin' on two months' time! No sir, you could n't do nothin' with her no-ways; she allowed she never cared no more for the speech o' people than for jes' so much wind in amongst the far-trees up back of the house. 'T was much as ever she'd leave another soul come a-nigh Bobby to do a livin' thing for him in any way, shape, nor manner, and so she jest took and stopped right there, and nussed him, and tended out on him, and done for him morning, noon, and night-times, till she like to have killt herself dead at the job.

“You see from the very fust, she'd run away of the idee that the dod-blowed project was at the bottom of it all, and seems's though the notion growed on her stiddy like, till she

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would n't give ear to nothin' else. ' 'T was me that done it! 'T was me that done it!'—that's the most you 'd git out of her them days, and come to that, she ain't never felt a mite different since, not for a minute's time.

“Them doctors they see right off there was no good to butt ag'in her in the matter, not a mite. They see that Bobby wanted she should do for him right along, in room of nobody else, and prob'ly figgered they might jes' soon humor the pore creatur' till he come to git through, being as nary one on 'em ever once dremp' but what he was as good as un'neath four foot of cold sod already. Well, sir, the amount of the story was, though, that bimeby Bob Henderson commenced to pick up a little dite, — ter'ble gradual like, at fust, you know, but still makin' out to stem the tide with jest a grain or so to spare, till finally all them three old doctors had to give in he was on the mendin' hand, and no gitting 'round it, but every soul here to this Cove that was

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anyways knowin' to the matter allowed that Susy Mary May was all the one that saved Bobby Henderson's life that time. Anyways, soon 's ever he got so 's to be up and 'round the least little mite, she jest claimed him for hern, huffs, horns, and hide, and nothin' would n't do but that the pair of 'em should turn to and git married right away off. I rec'lect the Sunday that Susy Mary appeared bride down to the Corner meetin'-house here happened to fall on the very day she was twenty year old, too.

“Bobby he always hung to it like a good one that he had n't no business to ever once think of such a thing as gittin' married, being as he was all crippled-up so awful bad; but Lord love ye! Susy Mary was sot as the hills in regards to that 'ere. She give it out there to home right up and down, that unlessn she could marry Bob Henderson right away, so 's to do for him all the rest-part of his life, same 's she has, she 'd take and heave herself chock off'n the w'arft

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the fust thing ever she done, and she'd kep' her word, too, sure's ever the sun riz.

“ Finally our folks come to see plain enough they'd full better jest hands-off, and give the gal all the slack line she wanted in the whole business. Doin' for Bobby, and tendin' out on him same 's if he was a baby like, was all the comfort the creatur' could take them days, and that's all ever she has got out of it since, doctor. Of course Bob he's been so's to earn a dollar by spells, you know, and always was ter'ble anxious to do what little he could, but same time it always looked a good deal to me as though Susy Mary May never wanted he should lift a hand. Seems's though the more she done herself all soul alone, the better off she felt, and as fur as takin' help from outside was concerned, why she never would hearken to it for a secont's time.

“ 'T wa'n't only yesterday she up and says to me she 'most knowed God A'mighty would hold it ag'in her for what come of heavin' the

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project after Bobby Henderson that time; but I told her I could n't noways see as there was the least mite of call to look at it like that. I done my very dingdest to soothe her down like, for the pore creatur' was commencing to take on consid'ble bad,—that is, for her, you know.

“Finally, I jest up and says to her like this: ‘Susy Mary May,’ ’s I, ‘you wa’n’t nothin’ only a little young gal the time you took and hove that plague-gone project, and for the life of me I can’t see as you was so ter’ble weecked for never once realizin’ the resk there was in them kind of things, bein’ as nobody never took the trouble to post ye up in regards to ’em. But there!’ ’s I, ‘even s’posin’ you done wrong that time, why Godfrey mighty! jest only look at what you done since,—that’s what always makes out to git me,—only once take and look at what you done since! Why, quick ’s ever you seen jest how bad Bobby was disenabled that time, you turned to right away and

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give him your best tow-line astern, and fair or foul, blow high and blow low, you've stood by him ever since in proper good shape, — there's no two ways about that part of it. The pair of ye,'s I, 'have made a master long, hard drag of it in comp'ny for goin' on fifty years' time now, and seems 's though you won't never let go of him till you see him all safe to anchor where nary wind that blows can't do him no hurt. Now,'s I, 'come to take it atop of all that, it don't look to me anyways likely that the Old Scholar up there ever once cal'lates to take and blame that project onto you any great, not at this day o' the world. That 'ere,'s I, 'right on the face of it, don't look to me noways raytionable like.' — What do you cal'-late yourself, doctor; be I so very fur out the way? ”

X

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X

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HEAPED high with cleft sticks of spruce cordwood to which snow and ice still clung tenaciously, Skipper Alvin Futtock's clumsy two-horse sled lurched creaking out of the narrow wood path into the public highway at the top of Harbor Hill. Others, too, were making the most of the excellent "going," and, pressed under frequent heavy loads, the road now showed on either side a glary streak ready to take a fall from the first unwary pedestrian. Westward, towards the sunset, it disappeared over the brow of the hill in two gleaming, convergent lines which seemed to reflect with additional wintriness the pale yellow sky whose cold light everywhere glinted across the crusted snow.

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In the absolute clearness of the nipping air a range of far-off hills rose dark and distinct against the cloudless afterglow, apparently little further distant than the spindling church steeple which cut sharply across them from a village in the first valley.

Once fairly in the shining highway with his team, Skipper Alvin stopped his panting horses and dismounted to replace the bars opening into his wood-lot. As he crunched back through the deep snow, Mr. McLean, the new minister, came in sight, walking briskly towards the village.

Although still helping regularly towards the support of a preacher in the place, the skipper had, like most of his associates at the present day, largely given over the matter of church-going to the women-folks. Circumstances, however, combined to bring him much in contact with the latest occupant of the parsonage, and though at first mainly out of liking for him as a neighbor, the old man was now

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beginning to attend service with his wife once more, out of genuine liking for what he heard.

On the other hand, Mr. McLean felt sure that in Skipper Alvin Futtock he had early found a shrewd, kind-hearted, and sincere old resident in whom every confidence might be placed, and whose opinion just now upon a certain matter would be of great value to him.

“Glorious weather, Captain Futtock!” he called, not yet having learned the fine distinction between the titles “Skipper” and “Captain.” “You’re the very man of all others I wished to see!” he continued, as they started walking along in company. “I’ve been waiting a chance for some days to ask you to tell me what you can about Mrs. Minerva Goodrich.”

The skipper looked up a bit puzzled.

“Mis’ Minervy Goodridge,” he repeated. “Blest ef I can seem to place no sich a one. Oh land, though,” he quickly added, “I guess

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likely you must prob'ly mean Min Belden down here on the Neck road a piece!"

"That's the one I mean," said the minister.

"Min Belden! Yes, yes, jes' so!" Skipper Alvin went on, a slight grin overspreading his pleasant weather-beaten face. It occurred to Mr. McLean just here that mention of this name usually did provoke grinning among most men of the place.

"Lord love ye, Elder," said Alvin, "I want to know ef Min Belden has really commenced to train her guns on the meetin'-house again! I heard say she had so, but there, we always hear tell so much about Min's cur'us works that I never pay no great heed to the half of it."

"She has been to church several times of late, and at my special request has attended one of our Thursday evening meetings at the parsonage," the minister said a little stiffly. "I've also called on her; in fact, have had a number of very interesting talks with her," he

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added with just a touch of defiance in his tone. "My wife walked down there with me this afternoon to urge her to come up to-morrow night again, but we found the house closed."

"I think 's likely," said the skipper. "Min comes and goes pretty much as she takes the notion. Her folks are about all gone from here at this day o' the world, you see, and she ain't noways beholden to a soul. I ruther guess she 's consid'ble well heeled now'days, too, fur 's money goes. Some of 'em 'round here pretend to say she 's independent rich."

"It 's strange to me why she stays down there, then," Mr. McLean said. "She certainly seems to have some means, and it 's a dreary place for a woman down there on that Neck in the winter. Why, the nearest house is a third of a mile off, is n't it?"

"Spence Robbinses? Nigher half, I guess," said Alvin. "Come to that, though, the whole raft of them clammers down to the east'ard of her ain't liable to be much of any comp'ny."

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I was going to say there ain't a one out of the whole bunch would know his name when he see it. Min always was bright as a dollar, you know, and someways or other she's made out to pick up a grand good learning. Don't you call her consid'ble well-learnt yourself, Elder?"

"In certain ways, yes, I do. I've been astonished a number of times at the books she has read. But why in the world does she stay down there? As far as I can learn she has n't any intimate friends in that part of the town, or indeed anywhere else here at present. She told me herself yours was the only house in the village she had been in for over a year."

"Sho! You don't say! I would n't wonder a mite, though, after all," Alvin said. "Min's a queer built genii, and no mistake about it. Anyone would nach'ally think she'd want to clear right out of this for good and all, considering the way she's always been treated by the heft of 'em here. There was a time

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when she and my Melissy was quite thick, and we seen consid'ble of her there to our place. After Melissy got married and went off, though, Min seldom ever come a-nigh us for a long spell, and same time the woman and me was always real tickled to see her, and coaxed her to drop in often. For that matter, we coaxed her to come and stop along of us whenever she wanted. She wa'n't only a gal then, to be sure, but seems's though even way back in them days she'd got the notion • that folks 'round here kind of pointed their fingers at her as ef she wa'n't hardly fit to go with, on account of her mother's traipsing, and that kept the critter feeling a grain stuffy like, all the time. You'd cal'late she'd want to quit the place now that she's good and able, but the thing of it is, Elder, Min Belden is master proud, and chock-a-block full of grit, too, and this notion of being drove out of town is what sticks in her crop the most. Then again, she sets great store by the old

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home-place down on the Neck road there, — says she loves every blame' stick and stone there 'is on it, and 't *is* sightly, you know. Take it summer-times, of a hot day, and you'll get a cool breeze drawin' off'n the water acrosst the Neck there, when folks up here to the village are like to stifle to death. I s'pose she doos hate to give it up, after all. She's got her faults, and like enough big ones, too, same's the rest-part of us have, but the way I always look at it, Min Belden never had half a show here to this place."

"I'm inclined to feel very much that way myself, captain, from what I'd already learned," said Mr. McLean. "Still, these are very disagreeable stories about her, and it's easy to see that any connection she may have with the church is going to mean trouble. In fact, the fight is already on to some extent. You must have known her all her life; now let's hear the worst that can truthfully be said against her. This is likely to be

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a hard position for me, and the least I can ask is to know the circumstances thoroughly.”

The Rev. Allan McLean was not particularly clerical in appearance, but he had a good fighting chin, and the plentiful Scotch-Irish blood which accounted for his crisp black hair, fair skin, and blue eyes easily stirred him into impetuous action against wrongdoing. In this case he reasoned that Minerva Belden, or Goodrich, had distinctly asked the church at the Cove for a fair chance, and this he was determined she should now have at all events. Far be it from him to decide as to the sincerity of her recent advances; in his mind the minister who would hesitate an instant at meeting her more than half way ought to be kicked out of his holy office; kicked out of town; into the sea; off the face of the earth. Temperamentally, as all his friends knew, there was no reason whatever why the Rev. Mr. McLean should not adequately champion the

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cause of so remarkably pretty a woman as Mrs. Minerva Goodrich.

“Well there, Elder, I hardly know jest what I’d ought to tell you about her, now that’s a fact,” said Skipper Futtock, looking the other earnestly in the face. “I was shipmates along of Min’s father for years, and a cleverer soul never trod a ratline. Ef he’d have lived, I guess likely things would worked consid’ble different from what they did; but you see he was lost before there was much of any bigness to the gal, and she never had no kind of bringing up,—jest merely growed up wild like. You take and not give a young one anywheres nigh the time and trainin’ you would ary half decent dog, and who’s to blame ef she goes wrong?”

“Sure enough, sure enough!” the minister exclaimed eagerly. “We’re all very much what our surroundings make us. But about the mother who was no mother,—who neglected her child in this way. I’ve heard she left the place under a great cloud.”

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“Oh, Lord, yes,” Alvin Futtock assented. “She turned to and run a pretty rig of it here for a long spell. A sight too handsome lookin’ for her own good, same’s Min down here always has been, according to my idee of them things. Why look at here, Elder, you come to take a woman set up same’s Min Belden is, or her mother was either, and with a face on her that you ain’t liable to forgit in a month of Sundays, and I claim it’s going to take extry fine steering for her to keep in the best water. You take a downright handsome lookin’ woman most anywheres, and there’s always and forever any grists of folks putting up some game or other to try and toll her out of the channel, and then same time there’s always and forever a big raft of women-folks mostly, that’s standing by ready to run and tell it over all ’round town soon’s ever she doos fall to loo’ard of the marks the least little grain.”

“Yes, yes, you’re about right,” said Mr. McLean. “The ‘fatal gift of beauty,’ you know.

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This young woman not only has a remarkably pretty face, but a most interesting one to me —that is, to —to watch and study, you know. My wife, too, is greatly taken with her, and simply refuses to believe a word of the things they tell of her. Some of the stories that Deacon Canthook's daughter in particular tells seem too preposterous. Miss Canthook, you may know, is especially bitter against her. She is one of several who always refer to her as a 'brazen-face,' and who to my knowledge have given out that the minute Mrs. Goodrich enters the church by one door, they go out at the other."

"Elder," said Alvin Futtock quickly, "you don't never want to go to work and take too much stock in the gossup-talk some of them women-folks will give you in regards to such a matter as this here. Now you come to take that Myry Canthook there. I won't say as she's anyways to blame, maybe, for being so tormented plain; but same time, ef she

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wa'n't that way, the chances are she'd never be so plaguy spiteful like. My boy Thomas, that goes in the lobster smack out of here, he always used to allow how they went to work in the first place and made Myry Canthook jest as plain as ever they knowed how, and then turned to and hit her plunk in the face with a club, to finish off with. Thomas he never had no kind of use for Myry, not a mite. She's a good church-goin' woman, of course, and all that, and she cal'lates herself that she's a reg'lar-built pink o' perfection everyways. I ain't saying but what she is neither, mind ye, only according to my way of looking at it, it's seldom ever any great site of trouble for them style of folks to toe the mark and keep themselves straight; it's mostly the good-lookers that have to mind their p's and q's, don't you think?"

"Yes," said Mr. McLean, laughing at the old man's sallies. "No doubt they generally have more temptations to resist."

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“Well, now, in regards to Min and her mother,” continued the skipper, “being as you’ve up and put it right to me, I’m going to take and tell you the whole truth of the thing, — that is, fur’s ever I know. Jim Belden’s woman, that’s Min’s mother, was handsome as ary pictur’ ever you see, — now there’s no two ways about that. Lord sakes! men-folks could n’t keep eyes off’n her a minute’s time! She wa’n’t raised here, you understand; she came from the west’ard, and Jim he got struck on her looks the worst way the time he went fishing out of Cape Ann.

“Finally they concluded to make a hitch of it, and he fetched her home here the tickled-est feller you ever clapped eye on in your life. But someways or ’nother our folks never appeared to cotton to her no great sight, maybe for the reason there wa’n’t ary gal in town could hold a candle to her a secont when it come to looks. She never once took

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a mite to this town, neither, and I rec'lect well hearing of her call it nothing only a dead-and-alive little two-cent gunk-hole of a place, anyways.

“She wanted Jim should turn to and move to the west'ard right off, but of course Jim he wa'n't fixed so's to do that in them days. All the thing he could do jest then was to buy her a handsome new organ and a nice set of haircloth for her front room, along of quite a few other little chicken-fixin's, and then start in fishing again harder than ever. His woman never was no hand to save, by a long chalk, you know, and Jim he had to be away to sea the bulk of the time chasing up a dollar. No doubt but what she *was* consid'ble lonesome, being left clean away down there on that Neck to eat her heart out all soul alone that first winter. There's little enough going on to take up folk's minds winter-times even right here in the thick of the village, but come to take it anywheres out back here, or down

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Neck ways, and it always seems to me young folks in particular was like to go wrong jest merely for lack of something else to busy 'em after their chores is done up.

“Now I won't say as ever there was nach'-ally much of anything downright bad about Min's mother. She was possessed to have comp'ny, and always was a master hand to train and carry on like with men-folks. Then she was so handsome lookin', Elder; set-fire! but I wish 't you might seen her all ragged out in her best jest once! That was what killt her, after all, for she never had no head nor heart neither, to go along with such good looks. She always acted to me a good deal same's a six-year old young one, and I don't cal'late honestly the woman had the brains of a blame' chicken in her pretty head! Let me jest tell you what she up and says to me the time they give up Jim Belden for drowned. Jim he'd made her the best husband in the world, you know; cal'lated she was as nigh

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perfect as they make 'em; would n't believe no hurt of her no more 'n nothing at all; and done everything under the sun to humor her every way, shape, and manner that he was anyways able to them days. Well, after the owners had every soul of 'em give up the vessel for lost, I took a notion one day I'd best drop in down there to the house in hopes maybe to cheer the woman up a little grain like. Gracious sakes, though! I found her chipper as a blame' canary-bird! Poor little Min, she wa'n't only the least mite of a kid then, but she was all broke up, and would n't give ear to nobody. I'll never forgit, though, how it took me all aback when her mother up and says to me like this: 'Alvin,' says she, 'I been thinking this very day how queer things doos work 'round. Now first,' she says, 'there was brother Sam he went to work and got drowned. Then Uncle Luther he got drowned pretty quick; brother John he went the same way inside a year's time, and now,

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my!’ says she, ‘would n’t it be some funny ef Jim was to turn out drowneded, too, right atop of all the rest-part?’

“Seems ’s though you ain’t need to know much of anything more about the style Min’s mother was than jest that, Elder. That’s her in a nutshell. ‘Funny ef Jim was to be drowneded too, wa’n’t it, though, real funny!’ Godfrey mighty, Elder! What kind of a show was there for Min with a mother made like that? Min had all her mother’s good looks against her from the time she was the bigness of a trawl-kag, and was always kind of lively-like and taking with men-folks, though as I say, she was liable to have them spells of dumps. But without it was in the matter of looks, she took after her father complete, and pore Jim Belden was one of the kind you could swear by. I seen him myself three separate times risk his life the worst way trying to rescue other folksees, and come to find out, that was jest how he finally went, the time his vessel

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was wracked, bound home with a trip of fish from Bay Shelore.

“Well, sir, soon’s ever Jim got through, pretty quick there commenced to be gossip-talk going ’round about his woman’s works a sight worse than ever. There’s no good trying to back and fill in regards to the matter, for no doubt but what she did carry sail scandalous hard down there for quite a spell. Quick’s ever there was any age to Min, she up and struck her own gait, and has kept it pretty much ever since, too. Her mother never had the least mite of control over her, and for that matter, never once tried it on. My daughter Melissy was all the one of the gals here in to the village that stuck to Min Belden through thick and thin; but to this day Melissy she always will have it that Min was a sight better gal than most of ’em that pretended to look so sideways at her ’round here.

“Finally, to cut it short, things come to such a pass that the two of ’em up and cleared

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out one day, and went to the west'ard to live. Folks down here kept getting wind of their doings in one way or another, but there was seldom ever anything to their credit told 'round *here*, you can be tol'ble sure. Nigh 's ever our folks could make out, Min's mother took up dressmakin' somewheres up there in back of Boston, but there was always forty different stories going about 'em to once. Bimeby, though, seems 's ef the mother took sick and died, and next summer Min she turned up here again all togged out fit to kill, in comp'ny with this old man Goodridge, — claimed to be married to him all nice as a pin, and no doubt but what she was, too, only lots of folks 'round here never 'll git through sniffing at the notion. The old sir was crippled-up pretty bad, and appeared to be a reg'lar-built invaleed like, in most ways, but money seemed consid'ble plenty, and they turned to and repaired-up the old home-place into A No. 1 shape again; put 'em up a slick

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little barn for their trotter, and jest laid right back and took their comfort till after snow flew that fall. Then all of a sudden, off they give it to her again, and we never seen sign of ary one till three year ago this last spring Min showed up with this same big stout woman that doos for her down home there now.

“The story was that the old sir had got through, and some said left Min every cent he had to his name. I ain’t much more than passed the time of day with her myself since she come back, but fur’s ever I know, she minds her business full better than the most doos, and seldom ever troubles a soul up this way. But I guess likely you’ll find that some of them clammers down to the east’ard on the lower Neck would been ter’ble nigh the wind for grub last winter without Min Belden had opened up her wallet for ’em more times than a few.

“Old Elder Biggs he’d git a chance about

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once in every so often jest to remind her how ter'ble bad she was, you know, but seems's though that was the most she'd git out of the church folks in them days, for in room of taking holt to help out the pore critter none, there always was, and prob'ly is now, a consid'ble click of 'em here waiting to tell how awful weecked her mother was before her, and to give her the cold shoulder every chance they can git."

"Yes, that's plain enough," Mr. McLean said, "but do you mean to tell me that this woman has made known her wish to join the church before now, and that any minister has ever refused to welcome her?"

"That's about the way it has looked to some of us, and no rubbing of it out," Alvin answered firmly. "Maybe she seen herself that she was stirring up no end of trouble, and quit on that account. Anyways, the church has come nigh splitting from end to end over Min Belden to my own knowing, and seems's

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though all the thing that saved 'em from total wrack was her taking herself right out of the way, same's she done."

"Well, if that's the case, it's an outrageous state of affairs, to say the least!" exclaimed the minister indignantly. "The stand I've taken in the matter ought to be pretty well known by this time, but after what you have told me, I will make it my business to have it still more thoroughly understood. No matter what the woman's failings have been, or even may be at present, when she reaches out a hand for help in this direction, she shall have it as far as possible, and if the people won't stand by me in the thing, then just here is where we shall most certainly 'split,' as you say!"

"Oh, there'll be quite a few to stand by ye, Elder; never you fret!" the skipper said. "Myry Canthook and the rest-part of what I always call the 'sewing-circle click' have swung things pretty much to suit themselves

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of late; now I jest hope to glory you'll stand up in your boots and learn 'em a real good lesson. Maybe 't will give the church consid'ble of a jolt like, but in the end I guess likely you'll come out on top fast enough!"

"I hope so with all my heart, for the good name of the society, if nothing else!" Mr. McLean declared. "But no matter what the outcome of it is, there's only one course to take. By George, Captain Futtock, to turn from her would be worse than a doctor's refusing a call from a small-pox patient!"

"You've got the rights of it, Elder, and no mistake about it," Alvin said as he pulled up in his own door-yard. "Ef you want any help out of me, why jest call on; I won't deny but what I'm real pleased to see you stand up for the woman so-fashion. Speaking about sick folks, though, did you hear how them Grommetses down on the Neck are making out? Pretty slim, I heard say they was last night."

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“No, I had n’t heard anything of it. What’s the trouble?”

“Why, diptheery, the worst kind, they say. Seems’s though there was three of ’em down with it already. I see the doctor this morning jest as I was starting out, and he was in a peck of trouble scouring ’round to try to find some one to go and do for ’em down there. All the neighbors is scairt blue, he says, and there ain’t ary one of ’em will come a-nigh the house, leave alone doing for nobody inside of it. Them that live to the east’ard, he says, in room of going past it by the road, slip through a gap in the wall jest beyond the brook, and waller in snow chock to their middles acrosst the fields for half a mile afore ever they dasst take to the road again!”

“Well, but some one must be found at once to attend to them,” Mr. McLean said decidedly. “The doctor will have to send away for a nurse, then.”

“Yes, I think’s likely that’s what it will

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come to, but 'there! Look at the bill of expense you 've got right off!" said Alvin. "Them folks down there can't stand no such dreem as that! Even the doctor never cal'-lates to git more 'n a mess of clams out of 'em every little once in a while for what he doos, and I guess the nuss would be apt to whistle for her pay without the town was a mind to take it up. Here comes doc home this very minute, though; we'll see what he says now. Hi you, doctor!"

Muffled in a thick buffalo coat, the doctor pulled up his horse with a frosty jangle of sleigh-bells. He was a young man but a few years out of college, and not yet fully broken in to many conditions of the simple rural life. Town-bred himself, in his case the open country was to some extent still associated with exceptional health of both body and mind.

"What's the good word to-night?" asked Skipper Futtock at once.

"I've got no good word; it's a bad mess of

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it all around," the doctor answered gloomily.

"It's really diphtheria, then?" Mr. McLean inquired.

"Oh, yes, and bad cases, too, — bad ones. There are three of them down with it now, and I don't know what's to save the others. It's discouraging business trying to do anything at all with those people, and the only wonder is they live as long as they do. Why, there was half a ton of downright rotten vegetables in the cellar of that house, and some of it must have been there for years from the looks. I could n't find that it had been cleaned out within anybody's remembrance, anyway. Then the kitchen sink drains directly into a hogshead or something of the sort set in the ground not five feet from the side of the house; that seems to be the regulation outfit, you know. They neglected to 'bank-up' last fall, said there didn't enough rock-weed come ashore to go around amongst them, so the

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drain froze up solid that first cold snap we had. But they kept right on using the sink as usual, and when it overflowed on the floor, bailed the stuff out of the window with a basin. That's a fair sample of the way these people live; and they're not all confined to the Neck, either."

"Pooh! I guess likely you'll find they ain't!" agreed Skipper Alvin. "We've got any God's quantity of them kind scattered 'round, and seems 's though you can't learn 'em nothing noways you can rig it. 'T ain't five year since the last diptheery scare, when there was half a dozen of them Grommetses and Robbinses wiped out in two weeks time! They won't never act no different though; they 'll remember being awful scairt of it, but that's all the thing about it they do remember."

"Yes, indeed, they're panicky enough on the subject now," the doctor said. "For that matter, the whole place is. I could n't find a

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soul here to go down there and take care of them for love or money.”

“What!” cried Mr. McLean. “Is n’t there any one at the house yet to nurse these people.”

“Oh, yes, yes, Elder, they’re in good hands now — first-rate,” the doctor said. “That’s the one bright spot in this whole business. I was on a wild goose chase most of yesterday trying to raise some one, but had to telegraph last night to have a nurse from —— to-day. When I reached the house this morning, though, there was Min Belden, or Mrs. Goodrich, rather, in full charge; had been there all night, bag and baggage!”

The minister gave a quick look at Alvin Futtock.

“’T ain’t one mite more’n what I would cal’lated on!” said the latter coolly. “What’s more, I’ll warrant she turns to and takes holt in good shape, too, hey, doctor?”

“The woman is a born nurse if there ever

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was one!" the doctor declared warmly. "I know she seems to be considered a little 'off color' for some reason or other, — at least by many of them here, — but all the same, she must have good stuff in her, and whew! but is n't she handsome, though! Why, I never realized what a goddess we had here amongst us! She's doing great work there now, and I'll give her credit for showing lots of nerve and skill in a case that's bound to call for any quantity of both. It's a mighty bad scrape she's tackled, and there's no telling how it will come out."

The minister walked homeward alone under the twinkling winter stars, doing a deal of thinking. He told his wife all that he had learned, and in fervent prayer at the meeting next evening, alluded most unmistakably to Minerva Goodrich in such warm terms of praise as to create an evident sensation among many of his hearers. For some days he followed up the doctor closely, and

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each day the latter grew more and more enthusiastic in laudation of his volunteer nurse. Largely owing to her tireless care and instinctive understanding of the arduous duties she had assumed, the patients at length began to improve.

“They’re going to pull through. I doubt if you could kill one of that family with a spiked club!” reported the doctor one night, in exhilaration of the favorable outlook.

But the next day he had a different tale to tell. Weakened by her unceasing labors, the brave woman herself succumbed to an unusually malignant attack of the disease. For some time it seemed certain that Min Belden, the bad, the brazen-faced Min Belden who so recently actually proposed to connect herself with the church, would give up her life in her attempt to save others, as her father had done twenty-five years before her.

Yet in the end the fight was won by a strong constitution and the heroic devotion of a phy-

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sician, who nevertheless in true maritime fashion, promptly and successfully pressed a salvage claim covering the entire property so lately endangered. And when later these two became prominently identified with the church at the Harbor, the threatened catastrophe did not take place. Under the firm leadership of the Rev. Allan McLean a period of slight unrest and transition was safely passed; but soon after this there were not wanting cheering signs that the old society had taken on a vigor and usefulness long unknown.

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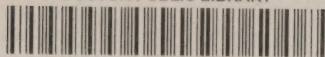
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